

From the Playground of the Gods

The Life & Art of Bikky Sunazawa

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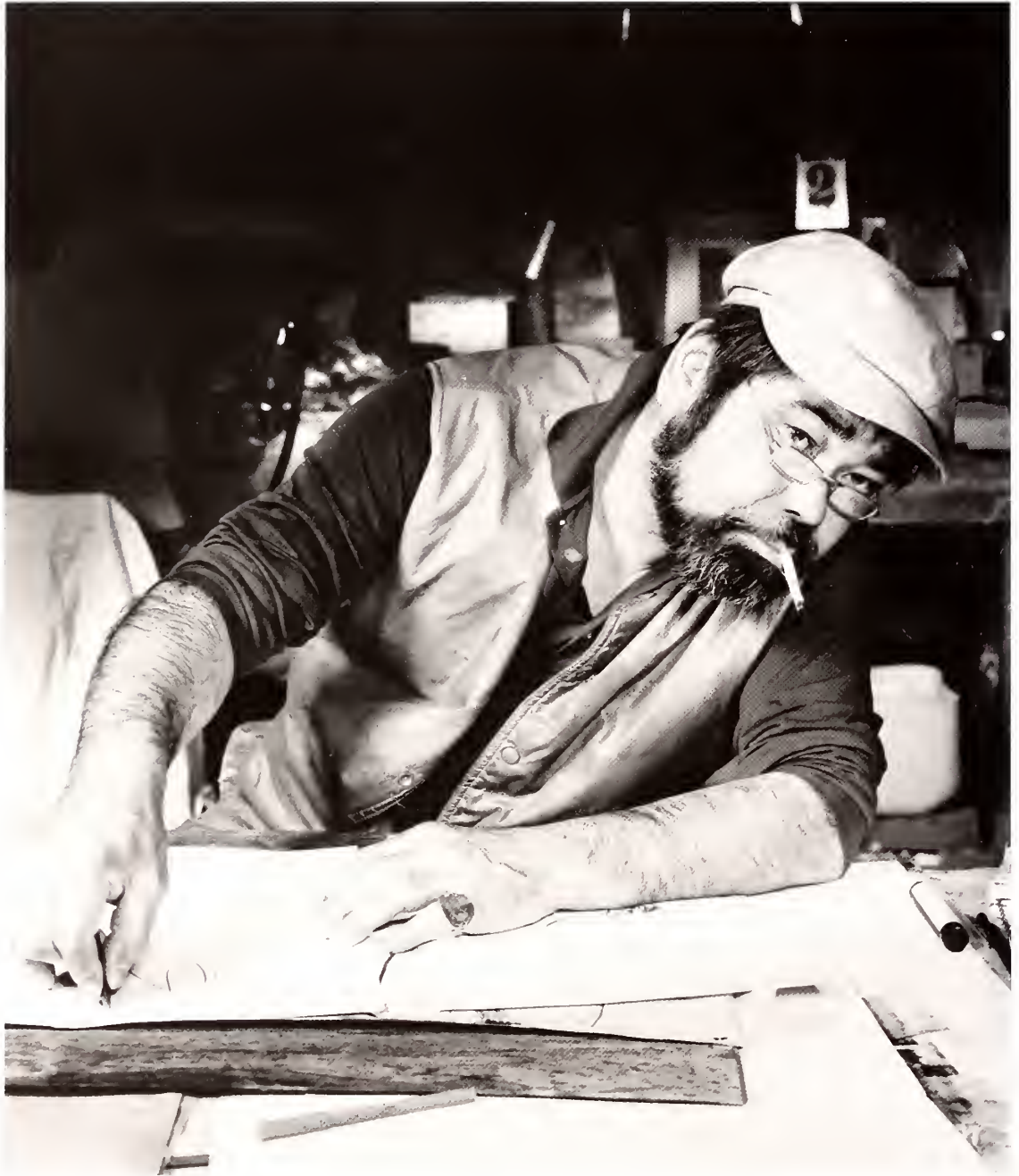
Chisato O. Dubreuil

Foreword by William W. Fitzhugh



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Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History,
Smithsonian Institution

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Editor's Note

Spelling. Readers may note inconsistency in the presentation of some Ainu terms, personal names, and geographic place-names. This is because Ainu language has three geographic dialects—from Hokkaido, the Kuriles, and Sakhalin—and many dialects with marked variation in terminology and pronunciation. Because Ainu was a spoken and not a written language, early field workers, lacking dictionaries, transcribed Ainu terms, and names as best they could. Many spellings have been systematized, but in some cases terms remain as originally recorded.

This book is dedicated to the memory of

MOTOKO IKEDA-SPIEGEL

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Author's Note

On November 29, 1987, two Japanese amateur astronomers from Hokkaido, K. Endate and K. Watanabe, members of the International Astronomical Union, discovered a small planet.¹ After the required rigorous independent examination, they registered it with the Minor Planet Center at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory on September 1, 1993, and received registry number 5372. They also named the planet. When named after a person, it is customary to use only the family name. The discoverers broke with tradition and gave the planet the honor of carrying only the given name of an extremely gifted contemporary Ainu artist. That artist was Bikky.

1. Marsden, 1993

Foreword

WILLIAM W. FITZHUGH

Arctic Studies Center
Smithsonian Institution

In 1988 the National Museum of Natural History opened a special exhibition featuring the traditional cultures of the North Pacific region from Vancouver Island to Amur River and Sakhalin. *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*¹ explored similarities and differences in history, culture, and art of native groups living around the northern rim of the Pacific and adjacent Bering and Chukchi Seas. Of these northern cultures, the Ainu, whose name means “people” or “humans” in their language, could not be represented for political and organizational reasons. The Ainu formerly inhabited the Kurile Islands, southern Sakhalin, and part of northern Honshu; today the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido remains the only homeland of the Ainu people, most of whom live in small villages scattered in different areas of Hokkaido. Because *Crossroads* was conducted under a bilateral arrangement with the Soviet Union, which did not want its political history involving the seizure of the Kuriles and southern Sakhalin and expulsion of Ainu peoples aired broadly to the public, *Crossroads* proceeded with a conspicuous gap in our roster of North Pacific peoples.

In 1990, while *Crossroads* was still touring, I began preparing an exhibition about the Ainu to rectify this slight.² Europeans have had a long history of interest in the Ainu, beginning with Dutch and Jesuit contacts in the Dejima (Nagasaki) trade entrepot in the seventeenth century and continuing with the early nineteenth-century work of Europe’s premier (and first) Japanologist, Philipp von Siebold, whose multi-volume opus, *Nippon*, brought knowledge of Japan to the western world for the first time. After Commodore Matthew Perry forced the

Japanese to lift their exclusionary ban on foreign travel within their archipelago in 1854, Europeans and Americans began to visit Hokkaido, both as tourists and for official reasons. They discovered a culture in drastic decline and were convinced that the Ainu would not survive more than a few decades. This view was also held by the Japanese, whose official policies were directed to hasten assimilation. The views of these visitors reflected their awareness, and sometimes their direct experience, of Indian cultures of the American West, which were also thought to be on the verge of extinction. Among the early visitors to the Ainu was the intrepid Englishwoman, Isabella Bird, who wrote a book about her 1878 experiences. Others came during the 1870s as representatives of the United States government, which had pledged technical assistance to the new Meiji government for the development of Hokkaido's natural resources.

Reports by these travelers and officials of the Ainu's striking dress, elaborate ceremonial life, and unusual physical appearance sparked the interest of American scholars and museum directors. The long flowing beards, hirsute bodies, large stature, deep-set eyes, and facial features (which most foreigners thought resembled Caucasoids more than Mongoloids), and the striking lip tattoos worn by women, made Ainu appear very different from other Asian populations. Although it is unclear where the idea originated, by 1868 Albert Bickmore, President of the American Museum of Natural History, was in the habit of commenting on the bearded "Aryan appearance" of the Ainu, and in the decades before 1900 this idea became the major focus of public interest in the Ainu, in tandem with the earlier romantic European notion of the Ainu as a representative of the "noble savage," more so even than the American Indian. For the next four decades, most of the large natural history museums in Eastern North America, including the Smithsonian Institution, sent collectors to Hokkaido to gather Ainu objects, study its culture and population, and make photographic records of this "peculiar" people. The "Ainu enigma" became a popular scholarly puzzle that tantalized nineteenth century explorers, museum collectors, and anthropologists researching the origin and spread of human "races."

Unfortunately, this overly-romantic and simplistic view of the Ainu has persisted into the modern era. Visitors to the National Museum of Natural History in the early 1990s who were interviewed about their knowledge of the Ainu mostly misidentified Ainu as American Indians or Eskimos, or thought they were extinct. Most who recognize the word "Ainu" know it only as a four-letter

answer to the popular crossword puzzle clue, “a northern native people of Japan.” The causes of ignorance are many: a lack of English-language literature, absence of museum presentations and exhibitions, paucity of Ainu scholars outside Japan, and infrequent European and American visitation to Hokkaido.

It was therefore clear that the exhibition, eventually titled *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, needed to broaden understanding among Westerners about Ainu history, culture, and contemporary life. Over the following two years, I and a team of Japanese, European, and American scholars and museum curators inspected the nineteenth and early twentieth century collections in Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and Brooklyn, and held seminars and workshops with Ainu experts. Befitting my own background as an archaeologist, I was intrigued by the advances archaeological research had made in researching the Ainu’s cultural origins. In this field, some of the earliest scientific shellmound excavations conducted in the 1870s by Heinrich von Siebold in Omori, Edward Morse in Tokyo Bay, and Romyn Hitchcock in the Kuriles and Hokkaido provided a foundation for modern archaeological studies by Japanese archaeologists suggesting ties between living Ainu people and the prehistoric Jomon culture of Japan. With recent DNA evidence, today there is nearly complete agreement that Ainu origins lie with the Jomon culture which occupied much of the Japanese archipelago throughout the Holocene and persisted in an evolved form in Hokkaido until ca. A.D. 500. On Honshu, Jomon culture was replaced by the forerunners of the modern Japanese state about 2,000 years ago, while in Hokkaido it was replaced by Okhotsk and Satsumon cultures which retained more elements of the Jomon tradition. Most archaeologists see Satsumon as the most likely immediate ancestor of modern Ainu culture in northern Honshu and southern Hokkaido, while Satsumon-influenced Okhotsk culture, a northern culture, is believed to be the source of Sakhalin and Kurile Ainu.

However, the team quickly began to see the exhibition needed to be more than an anthropological study of an ancient people to be represented by old Ainu collections and archival materials; rather we thought it was important to present the traditional collections within the broader context of Ainu history, archaeology, traditional ethnology, and art. Fortunately, Chisato Dubreuil, a woman of Ainu ancestry who had recently completed a master’s degree in native art history at the University of Washington in Seattle, was available and joined the project. Chisato had a deep interest in Ainu culture and knew many Ainu cultural leaders

and artists in Japan. Through Chisato's efforts, the exhibition grew to embrace the story of the Ainu as a modern people. The living tradition of Ainu art and culture enlivened our collection study and gave a broader purpose to what had previously been an esoteric enterprise. Suddenly the meaning of the objects and archival materials was transformed from "specimen" into "treasure," from nameless photographic images into someone's grandmother or grandfather, and the show took on a living dimension. The "unknown" North American collections began to reconnect with their Hokkaido past. We became something more than curators inquiring into a remote culture and began to see how these materials could contribute to the Ainu cultural rebirth underway in Japan after a long and painful period of history.

In 1868, a political upheaval in Japan had brought to power a progressive government known as the Meiji Restoration. Modernization was a major goal of the new administration, and one of its first acts was to give Ezo, Japan's large, undeveloped northern island, a new name: Hokkaido. Japanese citizens were encouraged to emigrate to exploit Hokkaido's natural resources. The resulting northern "land-rush" flooded the island with new-comers and brought a new way of life to a huge territory that until then, except for the Matsumae enclave and few Japanese fishing stations, had been the sole province of the native Ainu people. Meiji policies brought a harsh new reality to Ainu life that had already suffered three hundred years of military defeat, territorial loss, political and economic subjugation, and social discrimination at the hands of Russians and Japanese. The Meiji government and most Japanese immigrants saw Ainu adherence to their traditional life as an obstacle to progress, and policies were instituted to force rapid Japanese colonization and "civilize" the Ainu. Within a few years most Ainu lands, resources, and native rights had been taken away, and in 1899 these actions were codified in a native "protection" act whose actual intent was to terminate Ainu culture and force assimilation into Japanese society. It imposed harsh and restrictive conditions on Ainu existence and cultural expression, and the Ainu were forced to attend segregated schools and were refused access to traditional game and fish. Their religious ceremonies were banned and they could not participate as regular members of Japanese society.

The results were variable. Although the Ainu population on Hokkaido did not become extinct, as expected, neither did it grow dramatically; today it stands at 25,000, only 10,000 higher than in 1886. During these years many of those

born to Ainu abandoned their impoverished villages and moved to the rapidly growing cities where they attended high schools and universities, took jobs, and melted into the larger Japanese population. Once outside the Ainu residential communities, couples, including mixed Japanese and Ainu twosomes, often disguised their Ainu backgrounds so that their children could escape the stigma of social discrimination against Ainu that was prevalent among Hokkaido Japanese and elsewhere in Japan.

Those who remained “Ainu” expressed their ethnicity in different ways. Some maintained Ainu traditions as subsistence or small-scale farmers, hunters, trappers, and fishermen who continued to practice Ainu religion and customs, secretly holding periodic bear ceremonies, burying their dead in the Ainu way, and engaging in traditional carving and weaving for home consumption. But as Hokkaido began to fill with Japanese immigrants and cities began to grow in the late 1800s, economics forced the Ainu to develop new sources of income. Some found a life harvesting timber; others began to replicate decorative wood platters or other material culture items for collectors and the growing numbers of tourists attracted to Japan’s new “wild north,” whose attractions also included the Ainu themselves. As tourist centers in Asahikawa, Akan, Shiraoui, and elsewhere began to develop, a new craft industry took root, providing seasonal income for Ainu who carved, sewed garments, and demonstrated Ainu rituals and dances for the public, first in their villages for those visitors interested in truly rustic adventures, and later in prepared sites that advertised Ainu attractions and catered especially to tourists. By the end of the twentieth century the “tourist” Ainu had become an established profession and the sales of Ainu crafts had become an important economic activity for some Ainu families. On the one hand tourism codified a new definition of Ainu culture as a conscious form of living history and culture, though re-enacting it for the public in artificial settings disturbed many Ainu who preferred to maintain their culture in a more private manner.

Art in particular allowed twentieth century Ainu to express their beliefs and ethnicity in a way that produced income and internal cohesion for Ainu people, much as it had in earlier periods. As Ainu carvers began to transfer their skills from personal objects to mass produced tourist art—especially their signature bear carvings—new economic and artistic opportunities were created that led eventually to the transformation of Ainu art from its traditional personal and religious forms to commercial and fine arts functions.

Chisato Dubreuil brought this story to life beautifully within the *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People* exhibition and catalogue through biographical profiles of Ainu artists who pioneered the “break-out” of Ainu art from its traditional encumbrances, and from its commercial shackles as commercial tourist art, into the international world of fine arts. No one exemplified this transformation more completely than Bikky Sunazawa. Bikky Sunazawa’s art was unknown in North America and relatively little-known outside Hokkaido when the Smithsonian opened the exhibition in the spring of 1999. Bikky, a nickname meaning “frog” in Ainu, suited the earthy, iconoclastic character who rose to prominence in the 1970-80s as a charismatic young artist interested in advancing the political and cultural aspirations of Ainu people. Initially through direct political action and later through his art, Bikky translated the historical legacy of Ainu culture into a powerful message of modern Ainu identity unlike any previous Ainu artist. Although qualifying as a prominent artist by any standard, Bikky never achieved the recognition he deserved in his own country. In part this may result from his premature death and the geographic and cultural insularity of his Hokkaido homeland and Ainu ethnicity, but likely continuing attitudes of regional and ethnic discrimination also contributed.

I was therefore very pleased when Chisato, after leaving the Smithsonian, wrote an English language book devoted to Bikky’s life and art, and even more pleased that we are able to publish it through the generous support of the Motoko Ikeda-Spiegel Memorial Foundation. Her current work is the most comprehensive treatment of the artist who became the pivot-point in the development of modern Ainu fine art. Chisato Dubreuil has spent much of the past eleven years gathering information on Bikky from his family and friends, from newspaper and magazine articles, from catalogs of his art shows, and from her own interviews of art critics, museum curators, artists, art collectors, and from Bikky’s own writings. A complex character who richly deserves the “larger than life” epithet, Bikky was sensitive, dramatic, extremely innovative in several areas of art, loyal to his friends but hard on family relationships. Beginning with the spectacular composite designs derived from traditional Ainu textile arts passed down from his mother, each of his works proved equally innovative and inspirational, each successive style breaking new ground and revealing new and more profound insights into “what it means to be Ainu.” Like the Haida carver, Bill Reid, whose work and life inspired Bikky at a

crucial point in his development, Bikky translated his native beliefs, sensibilities, and ethnic traditions into artistic expressions that embody a strong Ainu vision.

His premature death in 1989, occurring at a time when he was still exploring his talents, was especially tragic in that he did not live to see the passage in 1997 of the Ainu Shinpo, an Act of the Japanese Diet that finally began the process of addressing repressive governmental policies of the past. Despite tremendous obstacles, Ainu people and culture survived the twentieth century, and thanks to the Ainu Shinpo, they now have for the first time the foundation for positive support for Ainu culture and language. Today Ainu culture is beginning to be recognized for its historical tenacity, the beauty of its art and literature, and for the important message its religion and philosophy—spiritual balance between humans and nature—brings to the wider world at a critical moment in human history. This recognition goes hand in hand with the recognition of Bikky Sunazawa as one of the most creative and important contemporary native artists within today's circumpolar peoples.

End Notes

1. Fitzhugh and Crowell (1988).
2. The bulk of the following text is an abridged version of the author's introduction to *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato Dubreuil (1999). Those interested in further information and appropriate textual citations of this information should see that volume.



Introduction

*Bikky looked like a bear, drank like a fish,
and worked like a beaver.¹*

As the opening day for the Contemporary Artists' Series '89 in the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery outside of Tokyo neared, Ainu artist Bikky Sunazawa dropped a bombshell. From his hospital bed in Hokkaido, far to the north, he insisted that he would personally install his work and that he was going to attend the exhibition's opening. In the last stages of terminal cancer, the 57-year-old Bikky, with typical single-mindedness, refused to listen to anyone who tried to talk him out of going. Driven by a creative passion throughout his life, the determined artist convinced his family and friends to help make his dream a reality. Even Bikky's doctor, moved by his determination and attracted by his charisma, took time off from her other patients to travel with him to Tokyo and take care of him.

The Kanagawa Gallery is the most important Japanese gallery emphasizing modern sculpture, and its large open spaces suited Bikky's large-scale wood sculptures. He had looked forward to the day when he could exhibit his work there. But more than that, exhibiting in the gallery, an important venue for Japanese contemporary art, also meant acceptance by the Japanese art world. A complicated man, Bikky fought throughout his turbulent life against discrimination by the Japanese against

Sidebar 1 Who Are the Ainu?

The Ainu are Japan's indigenous people, who lived in fishing, hunting, and gathering tribal groups for centuries along the north Pacific Rim.¹ They are one of the most enigmatic ethnic groups in the world, and the Ainu language is completely unrelated to any other language group, including Japanese. The Ainu were traditionally found mainly on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, southern Sakhalin, throughout the Kurile islands, on southern Kamchatka, and the Lower Amur River region.² While the number of full blood Ainu is small, now down to less than a dozen, there are at least seventy thousand mixed race Ainu throughout Japan, with



Fig. A1.3
Ainu hunter in
mountain clothes.

Continues on page xx

order of things, nature's reclaiming of man's work. It was a revelation: this realization of nature's primal role was what had been missing from his art. After this eye-opening experience of Canadian Native art, Bikky dared to create outdoor monumental sculptures in wood. He believed that the natural phenomena would complete his work after leaving his hand, and he was able to bring his beloved wood full circle. His work would be integrated as part of nature, which became a crucial theme of some of his later work.

It also stunned Bikky to learn that Native artists could be "successful and respected"—not just souvenir artists with little artistic skill, as many Japanese believed about the Ainu.³ While Bikky had been struggling to create a place for himself as an Ainu in the Japanese art world, the Canadian experience allowed him to break through the self-consciousness of being called an "Ainu" artist. He began accepting a wider definition of what an artist was, whether he was an Ainu artist or simply a modern sculptor. Because he had met well-respected Canadian Native artists, especially Haida artist Bill Reid (1920–1998), he started to believe that being an Ainu artist was not a liability.

The Kanagawa exhibit also included Bikky's last work, created during a frantic two-day hospital furlough granted by his doctors. They had granted him this privilege after learning that he was so intent on finishing his work that he was going to direct his assistants, who planned to set up shop in an empty lot in the hospital compound, with walkie-talkies while looking through his window. *Nitnekamuy* (Evil God; Fig. A.1) is named for one of the trickster gods of the

Who are the Ainu? *continued*

The Ainu had no written language and because the language is an isolate, there are few clues as to their origin. However, recent DNA analysis show the Ainu are very likely the direct descendants of the Jomon (the ancient Japanese), making their artistic traditions one of the most continuous in the history of art.⁸

The Ainu's traditional way of life changed drastically in the mid-nineteenth century. After the Meiji Restoration and consolidation of a central government in 1868, Hokkaido was officially annexed by Japan, and the Japanese government forced

Continues on page xxii



Fig. A.1: *Nitnekamuy* (Evil God), 1988.

Who are the Ainu? *continued*

the Ainu to assimilate into the Japanese population.⁹ The government forbade the custom of burning a deceased person's house, the tattooing of women's faces, arms, and hands, and the wearing of earrings by men.¹⁰ The usage of poisons for hunting arrows and setting traps was also prohibited and some traditional ceremonies forbidden.

In 1872 land taken from the Ainu was distributed to ethnic Japanese settlers, who were encouraged to establish farms. In 1875–76 a Japanese style family registry was set up for the Ainu, and the Japanese tried to force them to change their names to "proper" Japanese names.¹¹ Although the Ainu were now adopted as "equal citizens of Japan," the proclaimed equality was an illusion. To guarantee that there was a difference between the two peoples, the government distinguished between Japanese citizens and the adopted Ainu citizens in the family registry with the word *kyudojin* (former native) inserted before their names.¹² The

Ainu people, a familiar god in the region where he was born. Bikky chose the name perhaps believing that Nitnekamuy was casting an evil spell on him, perhaps confronting his own mortality.

The flight from Sapporo to Tokyo was rough; Bikky's gurney was lashed across the top of nine rows of seats to keep him from falling while rain and strong winds kept the plane circling Haneda airport, seeking an opportunity to land. Many airplanes turned away to seek calmer skies, but the plane's captain knew how serious Bikky's situation was and promised to try his best. He circled through the rough air over Haneda for nearly an hour, trying to land. Although everyone was fearful, the pilot finally forced the airplane down and made a safe landing.

The long trip to Tokyo exhausted Bikky, but he made a short speech for the opening, well-attended



Fig. A.2: Kanagawa Gallery opening.

because of the artist's popularity and the drama of his illness. His voice was weak, almost lost in the large gallery. The audience strained to hear him. "A sculpture has to be exhibited here if it is to be respected, it must come through this space." It reflected not only his respect and honor for this gallery, but also his strong motivation for completing this exhibition and attending the opening, even at the risk of his life. The audience was moved to tears, and a woman gave him a bouquet. Always popular with women, Bikky continued, "I see that there are a lot of my women fans here for my work." He still had his sense of humor, and it broke the tension of the opening.

The Kanagawa Gallery had asked him to write something for the exhibition catalogue, and he wrote with ink and brush a single word *kiki*, which he had coined, meaning "spirit of wood." The word was not only appropriate for the subject of the exhibition, it also expressed Ainu religious beliefs and Bikky's own deeply held feelings, acknowledging the spirits who endowed his works in the same way that his ancestors had for generations.

Bikky's return to Hokkaido was uneventful. For the next two days he talked to his children, other relatives, and friends, and painted with his fingers. He died just four days after the exhibition opening, on January 25, 1989.

As the dramatic events of the last days of Bikky's life unfolded, the dynamic public side of Bikky's personality was in the spotlight. Bikky was a complex man, on one hand he seemed like a Hollywood caricature of the driven artist, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth while he attacked the wood with a large axe, wood chips flying through the air and punching holes in the cigarette smoke. His large sculptures such as

Who are the Ainu? continued

Ainu were also forced to give up their culture as hunters and gatherers and were given un-tillable land to farm. Because the Japanese believed the Ainu were not intellectual equals, they established segregated elementary schools with a Japanese curriculum, and Ainu children were forbidden to speak their own language.

At the time of Bikky Sunazawa's birth in 1931, the Ainu had begun to be more conscious of their identity and heritage and began to demand an end to the discriminatory treatment by the Japanese government. The Hokkaido Ainu Organization was founded to improve the independent educational development of the Ainu, free from Japanese involvement, and a magazine, *Ezo-no-hikari* (Light of Hokkaido) was first issued in November 1930, giving the Ainu an organized voice for the first time.¹³

It was into this time of great social upheaval that Bikky was born in the Ainu community of Chikabumi on March 6, 1931.

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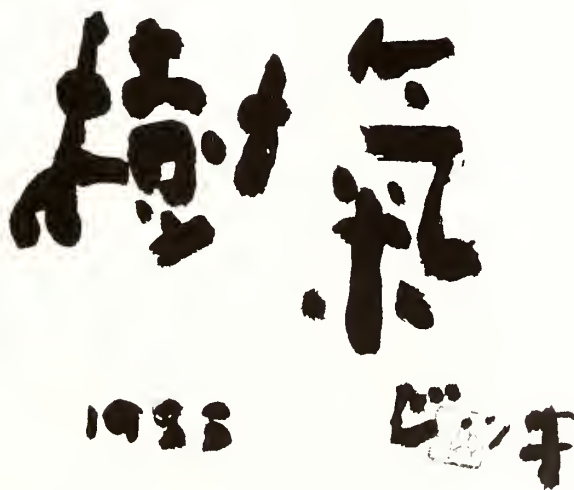


Fig. A.3: *Kiki* calligraphy.

Who are the Ainu? *continued*

Sidebar Notes

1. The Ainu refer to themselves as “the People” or “the Humans.”
2. Ohnuki-Tierney (1974:2).
3. Bickmore (1868), Siebold (1881), Kodama (1970b).
4. Vivien de St Martin (1872).
5. Dönitz (1874), Omoto and Harada (1969).
6. Ohnuki-Tierney (1974:2), Black (1988: 25), Kodama (1970b:73–4).
7. Koganei (1927), Turner (1989).
8. The Jomon, thought by many scholars to be the earliest culture in this part of Asia, date back more than ten thousand years. They are best known for their distinctive pottery. The designs on some ceramic and ivory humanoid and animal figures are very similar to historical designs of the Ainu, and the ceramic animal spirit figures of the Jomon such as bear, killer whale, and owl are also the main gods of the Ainu pantheon. Recent DNA research has shown that the Ainu are the direct descendants of the Jomon. The DNA evidence, design similarities and an apparent similarity in spiritual beliefs over the last ten thousand years lead me to believe that this artistic evolution is among the oldest ongoing artistic traditions in the world (Dubreuil 2003, 2002; Yamaura and Ushiro 1999:39–46).

found in the *Kaze* (Wind) series symbolize that aspect of his character. The overall treatment of these sculptures evoke the quality of a primal spirit, expressing the dynamism needed to stand against the most severe test nature can offer. In contrast, Bikky could be as sensitive and playful as a child. For example, the giant *Tongue of God* speaks volumes of the private spiritual man. On the other hand his small scale sculptures such as found in *Gozen 3-ji no Gangu* (Toys at 3:00 A.M.) reflect the whimsical, mischievous side of his personality. Everything about his work on the *Toys at 3:00 A.M.* series is completely different than his large scale works; they have a very smooth polished surface with meticulous mechanical detail. You can almost picture the little boy in him creating a favorite toy to give to the little girl next door. If you can picture these, you have a view of the extreme contrasts and the complexities that drove this multi-talented artist.

Bikky's greatest contribution to modern art was his ability to create a vision of nature that transcends the mere natural forms found on earth. More than simply manipulating wood and form, his belief in *kiki*, the spirit of the tree, allowed him not only to listen to the trees, but to give them another life. He constantly tried to see the supernatural order of things beyond the

here and now. In so doing, he went beyond the concept of naturalism and reached deeply into the Ainu soul. He once stated, “I don't consciously use Ainu themes, but the foundation for my work and my way of expressing myself is different from the Japanese. This can't help but affect my work.”

Since Bikky's death in 1989, his reputation has grown not only in Hokkaido, the traditional home of the Ainu, but also in the mainstream of the Japanese art world. In 1990 a leading art critic, Ichiro Hariu, examined and discussed Bikky's work on the prestigious NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) TV program *Nichiyo Bijutsu-kan* (Sunday Gallery), which is dedicated to discussions of fine art. Hariu stated Bikky's work was deep and complex, but the more

we know about the man, the more we appreciate his artistic vision. Art critic Tadayasu Sakai and contemporary sculptor Shigeo Toya examined Bikky's work on the same program in 2001. They were overwhelmed by Bikky's ability to convey a sense that nature is more than the trees in the forest, more than what we see around us.

Bikky's work has been included in numerous contemporary art exhibitions, and three large-scale retrospective exhibitions have been held: *Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (The Exhibition of Bikky Sunazawa) was held in Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art in 1990; *Tentacle: Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (Tentacle—The Exhibition of Bikky Sunazawa) was held in the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in 1994; and *Kiki: Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (Kiki: An Exhibition of Bikky's Art) was held in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo, in 2001. At the international level, Bikky's work was also exhibited as a major component of the large-scale Ainu exhibition, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People* at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. from 1999 to 2000.

Furthermore, important academic publications such as *Showa no Bunka Isan* (Cultural Property of the Showa Period) and *Showa no Bijutsu* (Art of the Showa Period), both published in 1990, included Bikky's work. Two Japanese-language books about Bikky's work have been published: *Sunazawa Bikky—Kaze ni kiku* (Bikky Sunazawa—Listening to the Wind) by Yasushi Asakawa in 1996 and *Kaze no Oh—Sunazawa Bikky no Sekai* (King of Wind—The World of Bikky Sunazawa) by Tomoo Shibahashi in 2001. With this much interest, the value of his work has risen dramatically, and collectors are finding a great deal more work than anyone suspected. While everyone knew Bikky was prolific, we are all surprised at each new find. Bill Reid was right, Bikky worked like a beaver, and his legacy grows. It's time that the man and his work are more widely known throughout the rest of the world.

Who are the Ainu? *continued*

9. Shinya (1977:174–9); Asaji, Miyatake, and Nakama (1993:42–3).
10. Shinya (1977:183–5); Asaji, Miyatake, and Nakama (1993:43). The tattoos of the Ainu women were applied on the lips, back of the hands, wrists, and forearms, legs, and between the eyebrows. Tattooing was done in several sessions or phases starting at an early age and finished by the age of marriage. The tattoo was started on the middle part of the upper lip and was gradually enlarged to surround the mouth, finally ending with a tail-like extension laterally and upwards; however, the tattoo design differed depending on local regions (Kodama 1970b:116–37).
11. Asaji, Miyatake, and Nakama (1993: 43).
12. Sjoberg (1986:51)
13. Asaji, Miyake, and Nakama (1993: 82–3).

Chapter Synopses

Chapter 1 looks at the influences on Bikky's youth from his parents' political activism in their traditional Ainu community in Hokkaido at the time of his birth in 1931 through his relocation to Tokyo in 1953. We also see his fledgling attempts to express the creativity that would completely engage Bikky throughout his life. Chapter 2 covers Bikky's exposure to Tokyo's intoxicating avant-garde art world of the 1950s and early 1960s. There he launched his first abstract sculpture series, *Animals*, and respected art critics began to notice his work. During the period covered in Chapter 3 (1964–1978) Bikky returned to Hokkaido and began two new themes, *Tentacle (a maze)*, and *Ki-men* (Wooden Masks). In the 1970s, the movement for Ainu civil rights embroiled Bikky, drawing him away from his work. Chapter 4 (1978–1983) follows Bikky's move from the urban environment of Sapporo to Otoineppu, a remote northern area of Hokkaido with an ideal working environment. Equipped with a large studio space and with an abundantly rich forest that served as raw material for his work, Bikky began carving large sculptures and creating "totem poles" to fill various local commissions.

Chapter 5 covers Bikky's serendipitous meeting with the Canadian scholar Douglas Sanders, who invited Bikky to Canada to meet Haida artist Bill Reid. In Canada, fascinated with totem poles, Bikky visited various totem pole sites, and his encounter with these powerful works was transforming. Working in the studio of the highly respected and successful Bill Reid made him re-evaluate his cultural identity in a more positive light. In Chapter 6 (1984–1989) we see an energized Bikky fresh from his visit with Northwest Coast Native carvers working with a new sense of freedom. He created many large pieces, including outdoor sculptures. In spite of the terrible pain of terminal cancer, full knowledge of which was withheld from him, Bikky didn't stop devoting himself intensely to the pursuit of his creations. Chapter 7 examines Bikky's career and how the triumphs of this charismatic and gifted Native artist helped change Ainu tourist art and established his legacy as a role model for the future.

Sidebar throughout the volume provide information on Ainu culture, a vital and complex component of Bikky's life and art.

Research Methodology

Being Ainu in Japan can be challenging, something I have experienced first-hand. As a teenager, I had no interest in my Ainu heritage. Like most kids I wanted to fit in, but it was hard to maintain a positive self-image when you're told you look different too many times. Much of that changed, however, when my sister gave me a wooden ring with intricate Ainu designs carved into it. I never saw anything like it. It was as if I suddenly woke up to find incredibly beautiful Ainu creativity all around me.

A decade later I met, fell in love with, and married an American Indian of Mohawk and Huron descent. On our honeymoon, we went to the small cultural center of the Chikabumi Ainu. There, in front of the museum, was a "totem pole." I was vaguely familiar with the totem poles of Alaska and Canada, but this was very different; this totem pole had traditional Ainu design elements that I could relate to. Next to the pole was a small sign that identified the artist as Bikky Sunazawa. While I had heard of Bikky, I really did not know much about him, but that day my life took a dramatic turn as I began to discover a vibrant new Ainu art, and the story of the artist who created that art.

In my quest for information about this incredible man and his art, I traveled from the deepest snows of the northernmost areas of Hokkaido, Japan, to the humid, statuesque palm tree landscapes of Kyushu in southern Japan. I interviewed many members of the Sunazawa family, including Bikky's younger brother, Bikky's three wives, two of his four children, and many friends and drinking buddies from his teen years and throughout his life, both Japanese and Ainu. I also interviewed professional acquaintances, employers, art critics, Ainu scholars, poets who wrote poems about Bikky, Japanese and Ainu museum curators and directors, Ainu carvers, government officials, the photographer who chronicled the last six years of Bikky's life, publishers, newspaper reporters, Ainu elders and Ainu cultural leaders. I viewed and photographed as many of Bikky's works as possible, those in private collections and in current exhibitions. I bought many older books for background material, copied and translated all of Bikky's public statements and stories about Bikky from newspapers, books, and his television appearances. This involved many visits to the Hokkaido prefectural library, university and regional libraries, and small village libraries. I went to two of his last working studios in Japan and to Haida artist Bill Reid's former studio in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. I

interviewed every contact Bikky had during his working visit to Canada, including Bill Reid, and have photographed several of Bikky's paintings purchased at his Vancouver exhibition, as well as the two sculptures by Bikky that were left in Canada. It has been an exciting journey, and it is not over yet.

Acknowledgments

This book, *From the Playground of the Gods: The Life and Art of Bikky Sunazawa* would not have been completed without the help and support from the Motoko Ikeda-Spiegel Memorial Foundation. I am also sincerely grateful to Motoko's husband, Si Spiegel, for his support to complete this book in the memory of his beloved wife. Motoko's friendship, her wisdom, and her passion for the Ainu gave me strength as I worked to give an accurate description of Ainu art and culture for the Smithsonian Institution 1999 exhibition, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*. The opportunity given me by William W. Fitzhugh, Director of the Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, enable me to bring Bikky's work from Japan, which anchored the contemporary section of the exhibition.

This book also would not have been completed without the help and support from the people I met and talked with during my research beginning in 1993. While it's impossible to list everyone who was involved with my research, I thank them for their contribution. However, special recognition must be recorded for my many informants. First, and foremost, my thanks go to Bikky's family members: his three wives, Mineko Kano, Junko Takagi, and Ryoko Sunazawa; his younger brother, Kazuo Sunazawa; and two of Bikky's four children, Oki Kano and Chinita Sunazawa. I also thank Bikky's many friends, especially Katsumi Yazaki and Makoto Kawakami, who generously shared with me their personal stories of Bikky, and who patiently continue to answer my endless questions.

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scroll sketch of *Tokyo no Hi* (Night Lights of Tokyo, 1988). I shall always cherish the memory of wearing Martine Reid's beautiful vest with Northwest Coast indigenous formline designs and dancing to a drum beat provided by Bill Reid in his living room. I also give particular thanks to Douglas Sanders, Professor of Law, University of British Columbia, who shared with me his research materials on the Ainu political situation in Japan, and the wonderful story of meeting Bikky, the trip to the Gitksan area of northern British Columbia with Bikky, and the subsequent trip to Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands) for the potlatch with Bikky and his wife Ryoko, and Bill and Martine Reid.

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End Notes

1. Haida artist Bill Reid, interview December 19, 1993.
2. *Bankaba Shinpo*, November 18, 1983
3. Ibid.



Frontispiece: Bikky's piece carved with his name, "Bikky."

Bikky's Early Life and Influences (1931–1953)

My mother asked me to embroider one of the garments she was making. I was very young and, even though I felt reluctant, I was attracted to the designs of garment. I'm grateful that she taught me to embroider because the Ainu designs are now second nature to me — they're in my blood.¹

Hisao Sunazawa—nicknamed “Bikky” (“frog” in the Ainu language)—was born on March 6, 1931, in Chikabumi, a traditional Ainu community located near Asahikawa City in central Hokkaido. Like other children in Chikabumi, Bikky enjoyed playing in the forest with his brothers, visiting his grandparents, and learning how to carve wood from his father. He was very lively, and his grandparents gave him the nickname that would stick with him for the rest of his life for jumping around too much. Unlike other boys in traditional Ainu communities, young Bikky learned how to create embroidery designs from his mother, a gender related skill rarely passed along by women to their sons. And because of his parents' commitment to winning fair treatment of the Ainu by the Japanese, Bikky was exposed to political activism from his youngest years.

Sidebar 2

The Ainu Homeland

“This northern country doesn't give up winter easily, when winter loses the fight, spring appears to be in combat against the snow and cold. The warm brilliant rays of the sun seem to sing a song in praise of victory.”²



Fig. A.2.1: Scenic shot of Hokkaido.

Continues on page 2

The Ainu Homeland *continued*

For millennia the Ainu people hunted the forests of Hokkaido and fished its rivers, gathering acorns and beech nuts, berries and wild lily roots. They lived as many indigenous people of the North do. Salmon returning to the rivers in the fall provided food and material for boots and clothing. They ranged widely over the mountains hunting deer and bear. Furs and layers of heavy clothing protected them against the harsh winters-heavy snows that come with the winter winds from Siberia.

Before the Japanese cleared Ainu lands for farming, much of Hokkaido—the northernmost of Japan’s many islands—was covered with forests: pine in the north; larch, beech, and oak in the south. The Ainu used wood from the forests to build their houses and boats and even processed elm bark for clothing, called *attush*.

It was this natural environment that stimulated Bikky’s artwork: as he noted toward the end of his life, “nature is one of my themes. Art is in nature and nature is an art. It is one of my artistic attitudes. Knowing nature means to be honest with yourself.”²

Sidebar Notes

1. Hariu et al. (1989:97)
2. Yamakawa (1988:191)

A year after Bikky was born, his father Koa-Kanno, his mother Peramonkoro, and three other Ainu activists brought the infant along on the long and exhausting trip to Tokyo to complain to Japanese government officials about a land dispute with the Hokkaido Prefectural Office.² The dispute went back to 1891 when uncultivated land near Bikky’s birthplace was supposed to be released to the Ainu as “indigenous allowance land,” but only a small fraction of it was—and that land was threatened by a local developer.

As were many who challenged the Japanese government at the time, the Ainu activists were called communists. Government agents followed them, and the police broke into their hotel. Years later, Peramonkoro recalled, “we went to petition the various government agencies such as the Ministry of the Finance and Ministry of the Interior every day, but everywhere we went, we had our pictures taken as undesirable Ainu. It was not a pleasant experience.”³ Although their campaign was a hardship for the



Fig. 1.1: photo of delegation in Tokyo.

Sunazawa's, it was successful: two years later, in 1934, the government returned their land.⁴ Koa-kanno and Peramonkoro Sunazawa fought for and won Ainu rights at a time when few indigenous people worldwide had yet to win many battles against discrimination.

Bikky's Parents

Both Koa-kanno and Peramonkoro Sunazawa were committed leaders and were respected throughout Ainu country. Although they were rooted in the traditional Ainu way of life, they were also pragmatic about the realities their children would face in a changing world. They encouraged Bikky and his brothers to discover their strengths in the traditional culture while also demonstrating what it would take to live in a world dominated by the Japanese.

Bikky's father, Koa-kanno Sunazawa, was born in 1893 in Shin-Totsugawa in Sorachi district in southwestern Hokkaido, and moved to Asahikawa in 1914. His official Japanese name was Ichitaro, but he preferred his Ainu name Koa-kanno, which means "two arrows aren't necessary," celebrating his prowess as a hunter with bow and arrow.⁵ He was also a respected woodcarver and grew rice to support his family. Even though the farmland returned to the Ainu was often poor, Koa-kanno continued his fight for fairness, actively organizing Ainu farmer and labor movements, for which he was highly esteemed. Despite his strong links to his traditional



Figure 1.2: Koa-kanno Sunazawa with bear carving.

Sidebar 3

Ainu Wood Carving

In traditional Ainu households, men carved virtually every utilitarian object, from parts of the house itself to serving vessels and implements, out of wood.

Much of this carving is plain and emphasizes the wood's natural beauty. Like many other carving cultures, such as those of Canada's Northwest Coast, many every-



Fig. 1.3.1: Ikupasuy.

Continues on page 5



Figure 1.3: Peramonkoro Sunazawa.

culture, Koa-kanno, in another example of his independence, converted to Christianity and served as a Salvation Army officer before World War II. He and his wife Peramonkoro held Sunday school training at home for their neighbors and children.⁶

During World War II Bikky's elder half-brother Yoshio (Peramonkoro's son by a previous marriage) was drafted into the Japanese army, even though Koa-kanno did not approve of Ainu involvement in Japanese imperial policies. When he was drinking he would sing anti-war songs and shout that he was "against the war and against the emperor system. All human beings are the same. I don't want my son to die for the emperor."⁷ Criticizing the emperor's policies was a serious crime punishable by death, and fearing fanatical Japanese neighbors, Peramonkoro covered Koa-kanno's head with bedclothes so he couldn't be heard. Nonetheless, Koa-

kanno's independent views in the face of such strong disapproval had an indelible impression on Bikky.

Like her husband, Peramonkoro, meaning, "child playing with a spatula," was known for her leadership. Born in Chikabumi in 1897, she was one of the few Ainu women to graduate from high school at that time, finishing the Asahikawa Sheika Woman's High School in 1915. Not only was Peramonkoro Sunazawa well educated, but she proved to be entrepreneurial and resourceful in making ends meet.

She taught Japanese dress-making, knitting, and embroidery to the Ainu women in the community, which gave them skills needed to bring some income to their families, she was respected as a master of traditional Ainu embroidery. A traditionalist, she felt an obligation to hand down her skill and knowledge to the next generation. She did not hesitate, however, to cross gender barriers to teach her son Bikky how to embroider traditional garments when she noticed his interest in

art, especially his interest in Ainu designs. Bikky recalled: “My mother asked me to embroider one of the garments she was making. I was very young and, even though I felt reluctant, I was attracted to the designs of garment. I’m grateful that she taught me to embroider because the Ainu designs are now second nature to me—they’re in my blood.”⁸

Not only did Peramonkoro strive to perpetuate Ainu culture, she was also the backbone of the Young Ainu Women’s Association. In this role she helped care for older Ainu women and younger women who needed help. Many Ainu women in the community respected her as an advanced and independent woman while at the same time she was known and admired for her knowledge of *yukar*, the oral epics of the Ainu. Again, his mother influenced her son as the *yukar* played an important part in Bikky’s art in later years.

As a tribute to their individual leadership, Ainu scholar Genjiro Arai recognized Koa-Kanno and Peramonkoro separately by including them in his book, *Ainu Jinbutsu-den* (The Legendary Ainu) in 1992.

Bikky’s Childhood (1931–1942)

With the exception of his early trip to Tokyo, Bikky spent the remainder of his childhood in his birthplace, the Chikabumi kotan (traditional Ainu community). Even here, however, Bikky’s youth was a mixture of two cultures, a dramatic change from the traditional Ainu way of life to assimilation into the Japanese society. His grandparents lived in a traditional Ainu house next to his parents’ Japanese-style house and spoke to him in the Ainu language, especially when scolding him. At the same time, his parents spoke to him mostly in Japanese. Bikky went back and forth between the two homes,

Ainu Wood Carving *continued*

day objects are beautifully decorated with intricate patterns similar to those found on women’s garments. Wooden carvings were either functional within the household or had a spiritual use; there are few examples of toys or artworks created only for purposes of self-expression.

The most important object carved for spiritual purposes is the *ikupasuy* or prayer-stick (Fig. 1.3.1). Normally thirty to forty centimeters (eleven to fifteen inches) long and three to four centimeters (a little more than an inch) wide, it is usually made from yew or willow wood. It is carved in a somewhat flattened shape and usually rounded edges and tapered at one end. Even though the carving area is limited, the Ainu have had an aggressive and creative relationship with the space and used an interesting juxtaposition of low- and high-relief designs that range from very complex to quite simple.

Traditionally, living organisms such as people or animals were never used in any Ainu design for fear of angering the evil spirits, *wen kamuy*, but the *ikupasuy* is an exception. They are carved with creative examples of the owner’s personal spirit totems in artistic renderings ranging from exact realism to the most abstract forms. Totem examples include bears, killer whales, seals, otters, birds, fish, snakes, and flowers. While human-made items also appear, especially boats, there are no known depictions of humans.

The *ikupasuy* is generally referred to as “a mustache-lifter,” or “libation wand” in anthropological literature. It’s an



Fig. 1.3.2: Inaw.

Continues on page 6

Ainu Wood Carving *continued*

understandable mistake because as part of any ritual in which sake is consumed, it appears that the men hold their moustache up from the sake with the *ikupasuy* when drinking. Actually, they are dipped in the sake to sprinkle it on an *inaw* or other important object to help send their prayers (Fig. 1.3.2). The tapered end of the *ikupasuy* is carved with a *parunpe* (tongue). Its purpose is to communicate with the gods in the pivotal role of mediator between humans and the gods, and it identifies the worshiper to the gods, for example, as a hunter or fisher or grateful supplicant. An *itokpa* (patrilineal ancestor sign) is also carved on the *ikupasuy*.

Although the *ikupasuy* has received much attention, the *inaw* is also an important Ainu ceremonial carving. Beautiful in its simplicity, the *inaw* is usually a finely shaved tree limb tufted at one end in various lengths from less than one foot to more than six feet. It acts as the most important messenger to the gods and is never reused after a specific ceremony.¹ The Ainu carve the *inaw* from different types of trees depending on its purpose. They use willow and dogwood, which have a fine grain and light color, for “good gods” who brought prosperity and welfare. When they offer the *inaw* to “bad gods” such as the gods of disease, they chose trees with wood that smelled bad or that had thorns.

preferring to stay with his grandparents. He loved the traditional way of the Ainu.

Bikky’s cousin Yoshiaki described an event that shows the mix of cultures even in their traditional community:

In the early spring one year, my mother and I went to visit Bikky and his mother while Uncle Koa-kannu (Bikky’s father) was away hunting. I enjoyed playing with Bikky very much and after playing we would get sweets to eat. When we got there we found many mothers, children, and older women with traditional tattooing. Salvation Army officers were also there as they often came to Bikky’s house. Everyone was listening seriously to the Salvation Army people while they told Christian stories. We went outside where there were pine trees and other types of trees, but most importantly there was an Ainu altar (nusa) that displayed many bear skulls that Uncle Koa-kannu hunted. This type of altar was found at every Ainu hunter’s house including my own. Both Bikky and I were very proud of what our fathers had done.

*A few days later Bikky rushed into my house and said “Yo [his cousin’s nickname], my dad has just caught a bear. Come and eat the meat in my house.” I immediately visited their house with my mother. Bikky’s house was already crowded with many guests. Many men already finished the *kamuy-nomi*, Ainu prayers, and they enjoyed talking about hunting.⁹ Uncle Koa-kannu was in a good mood as he rubbed his long beard gently and contentedly. Women began singing Ainu songs. The hot bear meat soup was passed around the guests. This was a very old Ainu custom. When a villager hunted a bear, his family invited all the village people to share their good-fortune dinner.¹⁰*

Both Christianity and the traditional Ainu beliefs were present in Bikky’s world. His parents held Sunday school and invited the Salvation Army officers to

their home, and they performed a mixture of Christian and traditional Ainu prayers on every occasion. Nonetheless, Koa-kanno was well known as the author of especially revered and sacred *kamuy-nomi*, prayer-like songs or poems that send messages of appreciation to the gods. Despite his exposure to Christianity, Bikky never espoused this system of beliefs and throughout his life maintained traditional Ainu beliefs.

Bikky's father encouraged him to find his own way, but discouraged him from his constant drawing or carving, even if it was traditional. He usually scolded him, saying, "don't do carvings, do your school work and study hard."¹¹ In contrast, Peramonkoro was understanding of his creative skills, and she bought Bikky crayons and paper even though the family was extremely poor, so impoverished that she sold azuki beans, used to make sweets, door to door in the Japanese neighborhoods to make the money needed to buy art supplies for Bikky.

Bikky's Youth (1943–1953)

Until he was six years old, Bikky had little contact with Japanese children. When the segregated school system ended in 1937 and an "equal" educational system was created for the Ainu children, Bikky started elementary school with Japanese children. This was a painful period for Bikky and other Ainu children, because they were constantly ridiculed by their Japanese classmates. Nonetheless, Bikky graduated from the Chikabumi Elementary School in Asahikawa City in 1943 at the age of twelve and from junior high two years later.

World War II ended with Japan's defeat in 1945, making life, which had never been easy for the Sunazawa's, even more difficult still. Koa-kanno and

Ainu Wood Carving *continued*

During ceremonies, men set several *inaw* in front of their altar and would dip the *ikupasuy* in sacred sake and then sprinkle it over the *inaw* while praying. *Inaw* were also placed around the interior of the house. The *inaw* for the god of fire was placed in the fire pit and many *inaw* were placed throughout the home. The east side of the *chise*, or house, had a window that was called a "god window," where another type of *inaw* was also placed. Depending on the area, this window would point toward the mountains or wherever the important gods could be found. *Inaw* were all made as offerings to different gods, and stayed where they were placed until they fell into decay except for the *inaw* for the fire god, which was burned after use.² Both the *ikupasuy* and the *inaw* are very much in use today—not only in public and private ceremonies, but for use in the modern home.³

The Ainu men also carve other spiritual artifacts. A man's ceremonial headdress sometimes included totem animals such as bears, killer whales, or owls. These ceremonial headdresses are worn by male participants for the *iyomante* (bear spirit sending ceremony). Also used in the *iyomante* ceremony are special blunt arrows carved to shoot the bear. The arrow is called *heper-ay* (flower arrow). It resembles a partially open flower, and the Ainu believe that shooting these arrows, which normally bounce off the bear, excite the bear gods play just before they actually kill the bear. The arrow is carved with the ancestral *itokpa* to let the gods know who sent the bear god's spirit back to gods' land. Many scholars have made the mistake of thinking the bear is a sacrifice to a god, when in reality the bear *is* god.

Sidebar Notes

1. Fujimura (1982:76–7).
2. Takakura (1970:634–5).
3. Dubreuil (1999b, 2003).

Bikky, who was then fifteen, attempted to farm the land given the Ainu seven kilometers from Asahikawa City. They were not successful, however, and it became almost impossible to make a living. To earn a small income, Koa-kanno sold souvenir woodcarvings in the Lake Akan tourist resort.¹²

Bikky, with the encouragement of his father, decided to become a dairy farmer and left Chikabumi at the age of sixteen to attend the Prefectural Agriculture Training School in Tokachi, in southern Hokkaido, in 1947. At the school he continued to experience the racism from Japanese students and teachers to which he had been subjected in elementary and junior high school, but he nonetheless completed his year there and returned to Chikabumi in 1948 with his new knowledge. He and his father joined forces with ten Ainu households and tried to cultivate the land in Ubun, a suburb of Asahikawa City, and establish a new Ainu *kotan*, Ainu settlement. A cousin working alongside Bikky on the undertaking recalled:

*It was a hard life with only a bonfire for heat and an oil lamp for light. We lived in a bamboo shed. Our meals were mainly cooked butterbur stalks and corn mixed with a little rice. We worked hard chopping wood, gathering bamboo leaves, and digging up tree roots.*¹³

Even though the work was grueling, Bikky sketched the farm animals:

*After I finished supper in the shed, I began making sketches of the cattle and horses I had worked with during the day. In the beginning I just wanted to draw a horse as it was and capture its sturdiness and strength. But the more I drew, the more I wanted to capture the essence of the horse—and eventually the animals I drew turned into abstract forms.*¹⁴

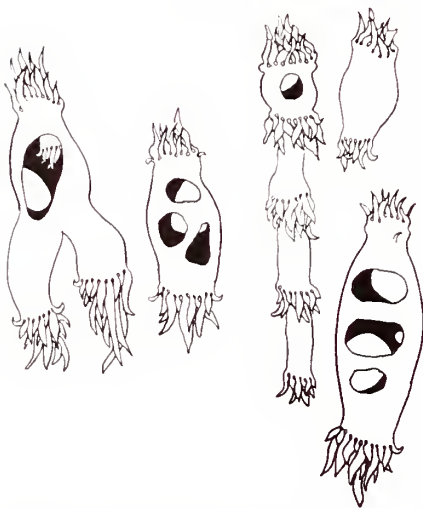


Figure 1.4: Teenage abstract drawing.

Unfortunately, none of Bikky's abstract animal sketches are known to survive, but an extant abstract pen drawing [Figure 1.4], one of his earliest known works, shows organic tubular material with tufts at each end floating in space that may reflect the kind of abstract form with which he experimented. Horses were among his earliest woodcarving subjects, and at least one of these carvings remains, a simple



Figure 1.5: Teenage horse carving.

standing horse [Figure 1.5]. Bikky carved its body with a chisel to emphasize its contours. The facial features are minimally done: the eyes are just carved-out holes, and the ears are two simple projections. The use of bold chisel or scalper strokes suggests a moment of repose for the serene and solitary horse.¹⁵

Bikky's isolation in Ubun gave him time to think about the racial prejudice he had confronted since his childhood. "When I worked the farm, racial prejudice was so severe, I began to hate the Japanese. I was much more comfortable with cattle and horses than people."¹⁶ Struggling to fight racial prejudice, he realized even at the age of seventeen that the core of his problem was his own feelings of inferiority. He knew that while he could do little at that time to change the discrimination against the Ainu, he could change himself:

It came to me that the Ainu should not be ashamed of who they are or hide the fact that they are Ainu. I didn't want to hide my Ainu identity, but I didn't want to hide behind it either. I thought I should grapple squarely with it. It was then that I made up my mind to use my childhood Ainu nickname 'Bikky' instead of my legal Japanese name, Hisao.¹⁷

Thus “Bikky” became his artistic signature. In another break from being considered Japanese and an additional declaration for cultural independence, he spelled the name with Roman characters, extremely unusual at that time.¹⁸ He used the name for the rest of his life.

In spite of their hard work, it was difficult to make a living as farmers, so Bikky joined his father and began to produce souvenir woodcarvings to sell in the Lake Akan resort area. In another example of Peramonkoro’s entrepreneurial spirit, during the summer tourist seasons, she owned and operated a “gift shop.” At first simply bamboo mats spread on the ground, eventually it grew into a real gift shop that is still owned by the Sunazawa family. Bikky contributed much of his seasonal work from 1948 to 1953 to the family business.

Revolutionizing Ainu Tourist Art (1952–1953)

In the late 1940s, major tourist resorts opened in Hokkaido, including the newly established Ainu *Kotan* at Lake Akan; and they began to attract tourists from the other parts of Japan, increasing the demand for Ainu souvenirs such as carved bears. Bikky’s father, already a well-known bear carver, asked Bikky to go to his cousin’s house to learn the techniques of bear carving. Bear carving bored Bikky, however, and he was asked to leave after a month’s study because he didn’t want to carve bears as the other people did—one of his bears had horns, for example. He wanted to be different, and he was.

Bikky’s first contribution to Ainu art came at age twenty-one when he created wooden jewelry with intricate designs, variations on the traditional patterns he had learned from his mother. [Figure 1.6] He pushed the designs further,

developing what came to be known as the *Bikky mon’yo* (Bikky patterns), which he carved into pendants and earrings, cigarette cases, small boxes, pipes, jewelry boxes, candle holders, and many other small



Figure 1.6: Rings with *Bikky mon’yo*.

items. The objects carved with the *Bikky mon'yo* sold well, and many Ainu artists began copying them. To protect their designs, Bikky and his friends created a jewelry association, but unfortunately never submitted the necessary paperwork to copyright their work. While he didn't know it at the time, he had revolutionized Ainu tourist art, giving it new vitality. Today, "Bikky patterns" are found on many items wherever Ainu tourist art is sold.

Leaving Home (1952–1953)

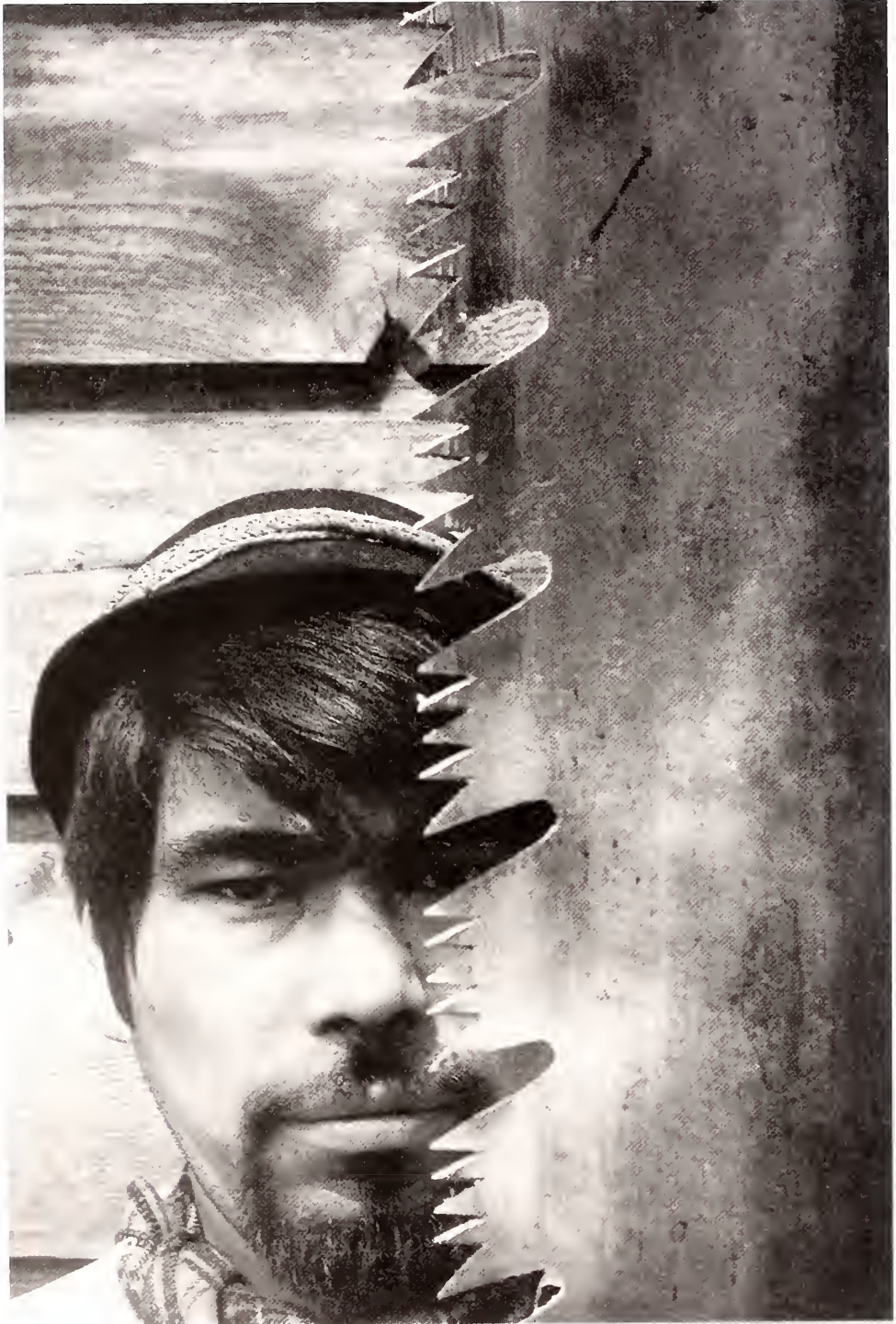
In 1952 Bikky's private and artistic life changed dramatically. Although proud of his success as a craftsman, he also created abstract paintings. Mineko Yamada, an art student from Kamakura traveling around Hokkaido on holiday, visited Bikky's mother's gift shop in Akan with a friend. As art students they appreciated Bikky's abstract paintings and began a conversation with him. By the end of Mineko's week-long stay in Hokkaido, Bikky had fallen in love with her and asked her to marry him—but she refused and returned home to Kamakura. A week later Bikky followed her, taking only his clothes, his carving knives, and some bears and jewelry he had carved. He spent the next week at Mineko's parents' house in Kamakura but had to return home when he ran out of money.

If the year 1952 was a year of intoxicating adventure, 1953 was a year of devastating loss. Bikky's beloved father Koa-kanno died unexpectedly of a stroke in August. Koa-kanno had urged him repeatedly to go his own way, and Bikky decided to leave his hometown for Tokyo to pursue painting.¹⁹ More important, he wanted to be near Mineko, the first of his many loves. In the fall of 1953, he gathered his carving tools and paint brushes and jumped on the night train to Tokyo.

End Notes

1. Ogawa Sanae (1989:7-9).
2. The three other Ainu activists were Genjiro Arai, a self-taught scholar; his wife, Michi Arai; and Kamegoro Ogawa (Arai 1992:151–5; Asaji, Miyatake, and Nakama 1993:78–9; *Hokkai Times*, June 11, 1932).
3. Arai (1992:80).
4. Asaji, Miyatake, and Nakama (1993:79).
5. An Ainu could have several names at different times during his or her lifetime. For example, a person could develop special skills such as being a great hunter or a storyteller, etc., which could cause them to take on a new name (S. Kodama 1970a:472–3).

6. John Batchelor (1854–1944) came into contact with the Ainu as an Anglican Church of England lay missionary in 1877. In 1879 he joined the Church Missionary Society of London and continued his work among the Ainu of Hokkaido following his retirement from the Society in 1924. He wrote more than forty articles and books on Ainu culture, including the first Ainu dictionary. In 1888 Dr. Batchelor founded the *Airin Gakko* (Loving Neighbors School), the first of several schools for the Ainu, but was forced to close all the schools in 1905 and 1906 because of the Japanese Ainu assimilation policy. Matsu Kannari (1875–1961), one of his converts, became a missionary and eventually settled in Chikabumi to preach the gospel (*Nihon Kirisuto-kyo Rekishi Daijiten* 1988:350). Because of her extraordinary ability to recite *yukar* (she would contribute to the making of twenty volumes of the Ainu's epic oral poems), she became close friends with Bikky's mother, Peramonkoro, who was also highly respected for her *yukar* recitations. This led to the conversion of Bikky's mother and father to Christianity (interview with Kazuo Sunazawa, May 13, 1995).
7. Hariu et al. (1989:102), Yamakawa (1988:205).
8. Ogawa (1989:13).
9. *Kamiy-nomi* are prayer like songs or poems that send words or messages of appreciation to the gods for help, for example, for a successful hunt.
10. Mamiya (1989:5).
11. Interview with Kazuo Sunazawa April 8, 1994.
12. Lake Akan is in mountainous eastern Hokkaido and is a well-known tourist area. It has been and continues to be important to the Ainu. An Ainu *kotan* (Ainu settlement) was established as both an Ainu commercial enterprise and cultural center.
13. Mamiya (1989:6).
14. Yamakawa (1988:183).
15. A specialized chisel with a circular cutting edge.
16. Kitamura (1963:94).
17. Yamakawa (1988: 180–2). In fact, Bikky became somewhat obstinate about the name. In Japan, the honorific “san,” is always put at the end of the name. Bikky did not like being referred as “Bikky-san” (*Hokkai Times*, October 29, 1981) and would correct anyone who used the honorific. Even his children called him Bikky, even though it is extremely rare for a child to call his or her father anything but “father.” While his early work was signed “Bikki,” using both the Japanese *katakana* or Romanized written languages, all later known works use the English spelling “Bikky.” Neither his family nor his friends remember exactly when he changed his spelling from “Bikki” to “Bikky.”
18. Kazuo Sunazawa, Bikky's brother, said that while Bikky wanted his name to be an Ainu name as a statement against the dominant Japanese culture, he also thought the Ainu name with the English spelling was *kakkoi* (“cool” or “sexy”) (interview May 14, 1995). Bikky gave three of his four children Ainu names: his eldest son Chikaru, his daughter Chinita, and his second son Auta. The youngest son was named after Bikky's father, Ichitaro, but it was done using different kanji characters.
19. Although Bikky studied the paintings exhibited in the galleries and museums in and around Tokyo, he never studied painting or other artistic expressions in the formal sense. It was extremely rare for a serious artist not to have formal artistic training if he or she wanted to be recognized and accepted in the mainstream Japanese art field. While Bikky admitted to having an inferiority complex about his ethnic background, he never harbored similar feelings about his lack of a formal art education. Bikky had great confidence in his artistic talents and believed that if you had talent, it was up to you to perfect it: no one could “formally” teach you talent.



Frontispiece: Bikky in Asahikawa, Hokkaido in the 1960s.

The Night Train to Tokyo: Bikky's Art Evolves (1953-1964)

I learned more from the free-spirited conversations with artists than from anything else.... We all had the common opinion that a work can't be called art if it doesn't have eroticism in it.¹

Until Bikky visited Mineko Yamada in Kamakura in 1952, he had seldom left the Ainu homeland. The island of Hokkaido had emerged from World War II relatively unscathed, and Bikky had not seen the devastation that the war had brought to most of the southern half of Honshu. As the night train from the north neared Tokyo, he was excited to be traveling to the capital but shocked to see the bombed-out areas, and how much had been rebuilt in the seven years since the end of the war.

The years immediately following the war had been grim for all Japanese, but the economic revival orchestrated by the government after the war had nonetheless been phenomenal. By the mid-1950s the Japanese economy was so strong that the nation had become a competitor in many world markets. Losing the war had humiliated the Japanese, but it also gave them a chance to start over and explore freedoms they had never known before.

This was particularly true in Japan's various and distinct art worlds. During the 1950s many

Sidebar 4

Origins of Ainu Tourist Art

Ainu men have traditionally been master wood carvers, and many of their beautifully worked bowls, knife scabbards, and tobacco boxes were created as trade items and then later as objects sold to tourists. The Ainu had been active traders not only with the Japanese but also with neighboring peoples from China, Korea, Russia, and other Native groups and later



Fig. 2.4.1: Historic photo of curio shop.

Continues on page 16

Origins of Ainu Tourist Art *continued*

with Dutch merchants. In exchange for their wooden objects, fish, and furs, they received rice, sake, tobacco, cloth, and metal goods.

In the seventeenth century, unscrupulous Japanese traders began to underpay the Ainu for their furs and demanded money for their goods; the Ainu also had to pay taxes to the Japanese government. To raise more cash, the Ainu began producing more of their traditional intricately carved work and began selling household utensils such as spatulas, ladles, and weaving tools to the Japanese. They also began to create other wooden carvings such as towel hangers and brush holders, items that were not traditionally used by the Ainu.

As the work of Ainu artists was becoming popular throughout Japan, carvers began to get more commissions to design and carve specific works. Contests were held for the most beautifully carved wooden objects,¹ and soon, the names of some of the most skilled and established Ainu carvers were recognized and recorded in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japanese historical materials.² Some Japanese may have understood and appreciated the quality of the carvers' works and the artistry of the designs, but most simply considered them to be exotic curios.

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Ainu were forced to assimilate into Japanese society, and Ainu customs, religion, and language were forbidden. The Japanese government demanded that the Ainu learn agricultural practices using the land-allotment program as an inducement. Because the Ainu were not trained as farmers and the land was not suitable for agriculture, most were not successful. As a result, many tried to support themselves by selling their carvings.

and Marino Marini (1901–1966) were held in Tokyo in 1961.⁵ Sculptures were also beginning to be placed in outdoor environments. When Isamu Noguchi, an American sculptor of Japanese ancestry, visited Japan in 1950, he noted a relationship between sculpture and architecture⁶ Although the Japanese didn't grasp this at

new art organizations were formed: the Modern Art Association was formed in 1950 and the Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, located in the city of Kamakura, just outside of Tokyo, opened as Japan's first museum of modern art in 1951. In the following year the National Museum of Modern Art (now called the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art) was established.² The opening of these large governmental museums stimulated other museums to be established at both the local governmental and private levels. Exhibitions of independent artists, such as *Andepandan-ten*, were held in major cities including Kyoto, Tokyo, and Sapporo.³ These independent exhibitions, sponsored by the Yomiuri Newspaper Company, allowed the work of contemporary artists to be seen without going through the political selection process that many Japanese art organizations funded by the government required.⁴

Before the war, Japanese sculptors pursued Western traditions of figurative sculpture and were strongly influenced by the French Romantics, especially Auguste Rodin (1840–1917). Very little nonrepresentational sculpture appears to have been created or exhibited. In the mid-1950s, however, the work of several contemporary Italian sculptors was exhibited in Tokyo, greatly affecting Japanese sculptors searching for new artistic directions. The sculptures of Emilino Greco (1913–1995) and Pericle Fazzini (1913–1987) were exhibited in the Third Japan International Art Exhibition in Tokyo in 1955 and large-scale exhibitions of the works of Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916)

first, by the late 1950s sculpture's environmental functions were beginning to be explored, and group outdoor sculpture exhibitions were held in front of the Kanagawa Museum. Japanese sculptors also began to participate actively in international sculpture symposiums.⁷

A New World

As a poor and isolated youth, Bikky had not been exposed to any art other than Ainu art—not even Japanese art. Although his parents were extraordinary, their world was limited primarily to things Ainu. Bikky was a product of that environment, a farm boy with a great deal of raw artistic talent. “Bikky wasn't familiar with fine art at all. He didn't even know of Picasso or Matisse at that time,” Mineko remembered.⁸

Mineko, on the other hand, had been educated in some of the finest schools in Japan, including the Musashino Art College, and knew many avant-garde artists in the greater Tokyo area. She introduced Bikky to this group of young, edgy intellectuals.⁹ Art historian Alexandra Munroe described the climate of the vanguard movement of the Japanese artists of the 1960s as “a grotesque and absurd imagination of the primal forces of sex, madness, and death, a preoccupation with aberrant forms of human nature.”¹⁰ This perspective can be seen in the work of one of Bikky's close friends, Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986). Hijikata would become famous as the originator of *Ankoku Butoh* or “Dance of Utter Darkness.” He was known for his intense and passionate performances, expressions of the primal nature of human sexuality.

Another good friend was Tatsuhiko Shibuzawa (1928–1987).¹¹ Shibuzawa came from a prominent family that had fallen on hard times after the death of his father, a banker, although they continued to maintain a literary salon.¹² Shibuzawa had recently graduated from Tokyo University with a major in French literature

Origins of Ainu Tourist Art *continued*

One of the earliest known references by a foreign tourist from the West buying the artwork of both Ainu men and women was made by English traveler Isabella Bird on August 23, 1878:

I was anxious to help them by buying some of their handiwork . . . a tobacco box and pipe-sheath, and knives with carved handles and scabbards, and for three of these I offered 2 1/2 dollars . . . they [said] they [the items] were not worth more than 1 dollar 10 cents, and they would sell them for that; and I could not get them to take more. . . . I [also] bought a bow and three poisoned arrows, two reed-mats, with a diamond pattern on them in reeds stained red, some knives with sheaths, and a bark cloth dress. I tried to buy the sake-sticks [*ikupasuy*] with which they make libations to their gods, but they said it was “not their custom” to part with the sake-stick of any living man.³

She goes on to say that the men “for ‘indoor recreation’ carve tobacco-boxes, knife-sheaths, sake-sticks, and [weaving] shuttles, and the women weave a nearly indestructible cloth [made from elm bark] . . . for barter, and the lower class of Japanese are constantly to be seen wearing the product of Ainu industry.”⁴

During the 1880s the Japanese began to develop Hokkaido commercially and as a tourist destination, connecting the island to the main Japanese islands with a network of ferries and railways. Japanese merchants opened curio shops, selling traditional Ainu household utensils such as platters, bowls, and spoons; and later, the popular carved bear figures. The earliest known shop was the *Yamada*

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Origins of Ainu Tourist Art *continued*

Collectible Curio Shop, which opened in 1900, Asahikawa.⁵ Another shop opened around 1903 and gave public demonstrations of carving and sewing by Ainu men and women in front of the shop.⁶ Because of the demand, some Ainu from the Chikabumi *kotan*, where Bikky was born, began selling their work directly to the public, which allowed them to keep their profit.

In 1917, in an effort to control profits for the Japanese, Asahikawa City enacted a policy that forced the Ainu to sell their products to the city, which then controlled the distribution and sale of their work. The city secured raw materials through the local forest office and sold them at cost to the Ainu. The city also invited an instructor, Kensei Saito (1894–1966), from the Tokyo Art School to teach the Ainu to use chisels and Japanese methods of woodcarving⁷—even though the Ainu had been extremely proficient and creative artists for hundreds of years.

Around this time the Ainu began creating various figures now known as “Ainu dolls,” *nipopo*⁸ for the tourist trades, even though creating human figures other than for spiritual reasons went against traditional Ainu beliefs. Ainu tourist art experienced very little change between the 1930s and 1952, when Bikky, then twenty-one years old, became disenchanted with carving bears and other established Ainu tourist art items. Breaking with tradition, he introduced jewelry with Ainu designs to the Akan tourist *kotan*, which in time, changed the focus of Ainu tourist art throughout Hokkaido.⁹ He created

when he met Bikky. While Shibuzawa worked as a part-time proofreader for the Iwanami Publishing Company to help support his family, he began translating the works of the Marquis de Sade, and he later became an authority on Sade’s works. There is no doubt that Bikky’s ideas about sexuality influenced his later work, very likely inspired and influenced by Shibuzawa, Hijikata, and other friends and acquaintances.

It was at Hijikata’s dance performances that Bikky met Yukio Mishima (1925–1970), an important writer of fiction, drama, and essays whose sensational death by *harakiri*, a ritualistic suicide by disembowelment, captured the world’s attention on November 25, 1970. Bikky probably did not know Mishima well, but was very likely familiar with his work.¹³

Hijikata’s *Ankoku Butoh*, Shibuzawa’s translations of and writings on the works of Marquis de Sade, and Mishima’s explicitly sexual writings sum up the landscape of the time. In a letter Bikky sent his close friend, film maker Katsumi Yazaki, in 1981 he noted:

“I learned more “good” from the free-spirited conversations with the various artists (from various fields) in Shibuzawa’s house than from anything else.... We all had the common opinion that a work can’t be called art if it doesn’t have eroticism in it.”¹⁴

The 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s were an exciting and stimulating time for Bikky as an artist and a person. Mineko said, “Bikky absorbed the intellectual world as a sponge absorbs water.”¹⁵ Bikky’s exposure to his girlfriend’s intellectual friends allowed him to grow to the point that he could confront the insecurities he had about being Ainu:

I moved to Kamakura at the age of 21 or 22. When I met people aspiring to become artists, I noticed one thing, that their ethnic identity had nothing to do with their work and how they were judged by others. My being judged as an artist has nothing to do with whether

*I'm an Ainu or a Japanese. The only important thing is what you're thinking and what you are trying to do.*¹⁶

Other than jewelry and small tourist art works there is little record of any art that Bikky may have produced during his first two years in Kamakura. It's quite possible that he was so overwhelmed by his new environment that he had little time left to create art. And, of course, it's possible that any artwork that he may have done has been lost. Then, on February 21, 1955, his first professional accomplishments were recorded, however tersely. He submitted a painting, no title recorded, to the fifth Modern Art Association Exhibition (MAAE).¹⁷ Whether this first submission was actually a painting or a drawing is in question due to comments he made thirty-three years later that his first submissions were drawings because he "couldn't afford to buy oil paints."¹⁸

Around this time, Bikky and Mineko, who were now living together, established a studio to produce tourist items with Bikky's designs (*Bikky mon'yo*).¹⁹ While Bikky was starting to exhibit his drawings and paintings, there wasn't much money coming in, so he turned to his woodcarvings to make a living. Bikky and Mineko lived in Kamakura from autumn to spring to produce tourist items and then moved to Akan to sell them during the summer tourist season in the family gift shop.²⁰

Bikky Focuses on Sculpture

In the late 1950s Bikky began to concentrate his artistic talent on carving sculptures from wood, often using wood he found in scrap heaps. There appear to be two main reasons why Bikky shifted his

Origins of Ainu Tourist Art continued

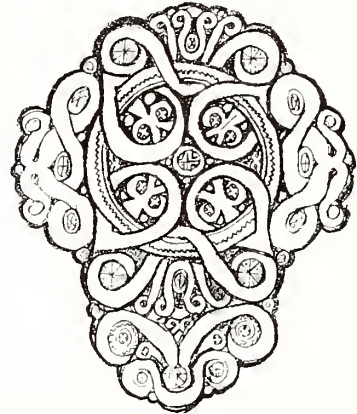


Fig. 2.4.2: Bikky *Mon'yo*.

what was to become known as his signature design *Bikky mon'yo* (Bikky patterns). Although he didn't realize his impact on Ainu tourist art at that time, he opened the door for Ainu artists to broaden their scope. His style of jewelry has been constantly popular since then, and while most artists in the Ainu tourist industry copied his designs, no one has surpassed the uniqueness of his style. Today the omnipresent Bikky patterns are found wherever Ainu tourist art is sold.¹⁰

Sidebar Notes

1. Sjoberg (1993:54).
2. R. Saito (1994:147)
3. Bird (1881:64–5).
4. *ibid.* (66-67).
5. Ishijima (1980a:2).
6. *ibid.* (3).
7. K. Saito (1979:4).
8. Ishijima (1980b:3).
9. This is not to imply that the bear and other Ainu tourist art items were replaced by Ainu jewelry. I believe that all early Ainu tourist art will have a place as collectors' items.
10. Dubreuil (1999b, 2003)

interest from painting to sculpture.²¹ He suggested the first reason when he pointed out his physical relationship to his art:

*Two-dimensional work like painting or drawing didn't challenge me enough physically. Not only am I, as an Ainu man, fundamentally a carver of wood, but I also need to work hard and get involved physically with my work.*²²

Bikky also began to be influenced by the work of other artists. The Bridgestone Art Museum in Tokyo held a one-man show in 1954 of the work of Ossip Zadkine (1890–1967),²³ a French artist of Russian descent. Much of

Zadkine's work in this exhibition was Cubist in tone such as *Woman with Fan* (1918; Fig. 2.1). Photographs of some of Bikky's first sculptures, now lost, show that they are reminiscent of Zadkine's work, although with more volume and a rough or primitive quality. Zadkine's artistic approach to wood was similar to Bikky's. Zadkine's biographer noted: "As an inspiration, wood has yet another value to Zadkine. It can be split. The split form, the cleft, works on his imagination. A man who is chopping also attacks; he opens up, he takes away, he forces his way through. He is striving to penetrate to the heart of the matter, to discover the human being in nature."²⁴ This kind of intense physical interaction with his materials became the core of Bikky's later artistic activity.



Fig. 2.1: Zadkine's *Woman with Fan*).

Another artist who possibly influenced Bikky was pioneering Japanese abstract sculptor Shigeru Ueki (1913–1984), who founded the Modern Art Association with his friends in 1950 and joined in the founding of the Japan Abstract Art Club in 1953.²⁵ Ueki worked intensively with wood throughout his career. He searched for simplified and organic forms to deal with the nature of wood, creating a series of abstract torso forms as he pursued the transcendental biomorphic form of sculpture (Fig. 2.2). While no references about Ueki by Bikky have been found, Ueki was from Hokkaido and there is no doubt that Bikky knew of Ueki's work. The world of Japanese abstract art was too small at the time that the practitioners would not have known of each other.

Bikky's next known sculpture, entitled *No-fu* (A Farmer), was submitted to the seventh MAAE in 1957. Perhaps he was facing the past and through his art exploring the dream of working with his father tilling the soil. This was one of the first works he signed as "Bikki," using the Japanese phonetic spelling, which also indicates this is an early work. In 1958 Bikky received the annual new talent award in the sculpture division of the eighth MAAE, his first award in a major sculpture competition. He also submitted a large-scale work, *Dobutsu 6 Hokaku sareta Dobutsu* (Animal 6: Captured Animal; Fig. 2.3), to the *Shudan Gendai Chokoku-ten* (the Avant-garde Sculptors' Group Contemporary Exhibition) in 1960. This sculptors' group was founded by such leading artists as Taro Okamoto (1911–1996) and was



Fig. 2.2: Ueki.

independent of established academies and traditions in Japan.²⁶ Bikky and thirty-seven other free-thinking artists were featured in the first exhibition at the Seibu Department Store in Tokyo.²⁷ This was a significant event to be a part of at that time, and it received a great deal of attention from both the press and the public.

Animal 6: Captured Animal is one of Bikky's earliest sculptures to have survived and is in the collections of the Hokkaido Museum of Art. Its biomorphic form reminds the viewer of a flayed animal, more specifically of the skinned bear in the *iyomante*, the Ainu spirit-sending ceremony, which Bikky often witnessed during his youth. Another clue that this work is strongly linked to Bikky's Ainu heritage is that he has incised it with an *itokpa*, the Ainu patrilineal ancestral sign; this may be the first large sculpture directly related to Bikky's cultural background.



Fig. 2.3: *Dobutsu 6 Hokaku sareta Dobutsu* (Animal 6: Captured Animal), 1960.

Around 1957 Bikky left the Tokyo area and moved to Asahikawa City, near his birthplace of Chikabumi. Although Bikky and Mineko had only just married and soon had a son in April 1957, their relationship was in serious trouble, and a divorce soon followed. Women found Bikky's charisma irresistible, and Bikky had a most difficult time controlling that primal urge, which created relationship problems throughout most of his life. Wanting to start a new life in Hokkaido, he married Junko Takagi in 1961.

Bikky enjoyed associating with his old Ainu friends; for example, two of his friends, his younger brother, and he appeared on TV for fun. They organized

a band for an amateur singing program on a Sapporo TV station and sang a song with Ainu words to the melody of “You Are My Sunshine.”²⁸ However, not everything was fun and games: he devoted a great deal of time to designing an Ainu craft center in Chikabumi. The purpose for this center was to provide a place for Ainu people of the district to produce Ainu art and to learn the wider aspects of carving, supervised by accomplished wood carvers, so that they might produce quality work. He had strong beliefs about Ainu art in contemporary times:

*I don't like bear carvings because they are not the real Ainu work of Hokkaido. The essence of Ainu art should be an expression of the life of living things or an expression of a certain pathos which is received from living things while dealing with the medium of wood. The Ainu carver should then revive these elements to the modern times.*²⁹

This statement not only sets the tone of his early series theme, Animal, but was the basis of his spirituality. The craft center became a reality and was becoming successful, until the building was destroyed to make room for a new street. The center was not rebuilt.

The “Animal” Series (1961–1964)

While in Asahikawa Bikky began work on the first of his “Animal” sculptural series. Already a theme that he had been exploring, these biomorphic forms suggest the mystery of life, growth, and metamorphosis, and explore Bikky’s connection to Ainu spirituality and animism, as well as close connection to Zakine and Ueki’s styles.

Bikky made a brief statement about the “Animal” theme in later life: “When expressing what is universal in animals, you discover the essence of what it means to be human.”³⁰ Bikky wanted to express the mystery of life by going back to the ultimate origin of all living things. He

Sidebar 5 Ainu Fabric Art

For millennia Ainu women designed and sewed textiles that had to withstand Hokkaido’s harsh climate. They made these sturdy garments using natural materials such as animal fur, fish skin, bird feathers and bark and grass; and later processed cotton cloth and silk acquired in trade with the Japanese and Chinese.



Fig. 2.5.1: Painting of Woman Teaching Patterns to Girls, 1800.

Continues on page 24

Ainu Fabric Art *continued*

Ainu women designed and created garments that were beautiful as well as functional, often embroidered and appliquéd with traditional abstract patterns.¹

Sewing was a very important role for Ainu women as a means not only of being highly appreciated as a wife and mother but also as a fabric artist. Sewing needles were perhaps an Ainu woman's most important possession, and she kept them in a small, ornately decorated wooden or bone tube worn around the neck.

Ainu women spent a great deal of time sewing and creating their own original designs. While they were sewing they visualized the person who would wear the garment and chose the materials and designs they thought most suitable to the wearer. Generally, a woman put the most effort into the designs for her husband's garments.² Highly decorated garments were used for special ceremonies such as the *iyomante* (bear-sending ceremony, see sidebar 3). The special garments not only pleased the spirits but were thought to protect the person wearing them. Garments were never used just to protect the Ainu from the elements—there was always a spiritual element to them, not to mention a sense of fashion trends that differed regionally.

Patterns embroidered or appliquéd on garments were passed down from mother to daughter—Ainu girls did not receive



Fig. 2.5.2: garment with Ainu designs.

Continues on page 26

believed human beings share some characteristics with all living things, being formed and reproduced as part of the circle of nature since the beginning of time.

Bikky submitted the work *Animal B* (Fig. 2.4) to the twelfth MAAE in 1962. The biomorphic shape of the sculpture was a strong implication of growth, giving the piece the feeling of an amoeba or a bacterium. On the strength of this piece, he was accepted as a member of the National Modern Art Association, another milestone.³¹

In 1962 Bikky held two one-man exhibitions in Tokyo galleries and became a member of the Hokkaido Artists' Exhibition of MAA. Because of this acceptance, officials at the Tokyo City Museum began to call him *sensei* (teacher or master).³² Although any other artist would have been pleased at acceptance by the Japanese art establishment, Bikky believed that the museum officials' attitude was hypocritical, and refused to acknowledge the recognition. He had no advanced education of any kind and had been shunned by the museum before he became a member.

At the end of the year he submitted *Animal-Ushi* (Animal-Cow; Fig. 2.5) to the third Avant-garde Sculptors' Group Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition. His style had taken a new and important change of direction although he was still pursuing the location of the "Animal" theme. While the work



Figure 2.4: *Animal B*, 1962.

is unknown, photographs show the piece as a tall column with a rugged surface. The art critic Miki³³ wrote:

*Bikky Sunazawa has submitted a “totem pole”-like work, Animal-Cow, in which he has successfully hinted at the figure of an animal. The texture of the upper and lower pieces differs. It’s not clear how he meant to balance them, but he did effectively contrast the smoother upper piece with the spiny texture of the base.*³⁴

Several other critics also noted that the work resembled a totem pole, comments that possibly spurred Bikky’s later interest in the art of Canada’s Northwest Coast Indians.

Bikky continued to create upright columnar pieces. *Animal Me (B)* (Animal Eye; Fig. 2.6) is carved with undulating ridges and whirlpool designs that suggest complex Ainu textile designs. The paired eyelike shape, a design which appears frequently in Ainu work (Fig. 2.7), is usually called *kamuy chik*, the god’s eye, intended to ward off evil. Bikky undoubtedly intended to incorporate the power and mysticism of the eye into his sculpture, evoking an interaction between the audience and the sculpture.



Fig. 2.7: *Kamuy-chik*.



Fig. 2.6: *Animal Me (Animal Eye)*, 1963.



Fig. 2.5: *Animal-Ushi (Animal-Cow)*, 1962.

Ainu Fabric Art *continued*

formal instruction but learned the basics of design and then created their own patterns. Each new garment had a different pattern that the woman developed without sketching beforehand as she sewed the garment. It was an important expectation that every design be different than the last.

Patterns were not representational even though some may appear to be symbolic of natural elements such as wind, rain, or snow. Ainu women never incorporated design elements from nature, or wild animals into garments because they believed that the animals' spirit would be trapped in the design and cause harm. There are, however, some very rare pictorial examples of butterflies, birds, and flowers that may have been influenced by Japanese kimonos. Decorative patterns, made from contrasting colors, graced the front, back, sleeve, and hem borders, and were intended to keep evil spirits from entering the body—much as Ainu mothers would place rope around a baby while working outside to keep spirits away. Patterns may also have echoed the curving designs that women tattooed on the back of their hands, around their arms,

At the end of 1963 Bikky joined the Andepandan Exhibition in Hokkaido and submitted the last of his “Animal” themed works and a new work totally different than anything in the past, *Tentakuru (meikyu)* [Tentacle (maze)]. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of these works is not known. The title Tentacle presages Bikky's next theme, as he stated:

I developed the theme of “Animal” for eight years. I wanted to dip deep to expose the true nature of “Animal” which includes the human animal. I have taken the *Animal* theme as far as I can, and I am satisfied with the results. I have decided to pursue a new theme “Meikyu” (maze), which can be described as an extension of “Animal,” but much deeper.

The human animal is capable of thinking and I want to explore the human process through my art. When you look at a human brain, it looks like a maze (tentacle). However, I also want to explore the mystery of the maze from a metaphysical perspective”³⁵

In 1964 he ended the “Animal” theme after he had his third exhibition in Tokyo. During this period he also ended his membership of MAA, as he explained:

I was one of the judges in the MAA competition, which awarded prizes to applicants based on a show of hands without discussion. A young person like me, and a new member like me, should not judge whether other artists' works are good or bad.³⁶

Bikky was completely a self-taught, self-educated artist, which was extremely unusual at that time. Even though some self-taught artists in the fifties emerged from the fringe of the established Japanese art field, they usually worked in the artistic expressions of Dadaism or the Anti-Art (*Han-geijutsu*) movement. In many respects Bikky was a very raw talent, with the exception of the work of

Zadkine and probably Ueki, Bikky isn't known to have been influenced by any particular school or style of art, and his artistic training was only based on Ainu traditional carving, which carried no respect. In contrast, the majority of Japanese artists were from privileged families and trained at formal art schools or they were trained in the ancient master-disciple system. By only acknowledging or evaluating young artists by their academic background or family ties the conservative hardliners controlled who entered the all-important art circle. Bikky wasn't happy about these political relationships in the Modern Art Association. He made up his mind to concentrate on one-man shows from then on. It was time for him to move on to the next stage of his artistic activity.

End Notes

1. Letter to Katsumi Yazaki, 1981, in K. Yazaki's private collection. Bikky's statement about having a "common opinion" with Shibuzawa concerning eroticism in art may mislead the reader. Shibuzawa's involvement with sexuality seems to be as a passive viewer and critic, while Bikky on the other hand, was an active participant, a partner in the sensual act of creating art.
2. Miki (1990:112).
3. An exhibition of independent artists organized by the participants as opposed to *kanten* or exhibitions held by the government. "This type of exhibition was developed in France. It is similar to *zaiya-ten* (nongovernmental exhibitions), but it is different from *zaiya-ten* in the sense that *andepandan-ten* has the aspect of *mukansa* (not having the work submitted to a selecting committee) and prizes are not given. The Nihon Andepandan-ten and Kyoto Andepandan-ten were two of the more popular exhibits in Japan" (*A Dictionary of Japanese Art Terms* 1990:20).
4. Munroe (1994:149–50; 398).
5. Fujishima (1990b:162–4).
6. Miki (1990:121–4). Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), was a U.S. sculptor of Japanese descent. He was born and raised in America. "He studied with Gutzon Borglum (the carver of Mount Rushmore) and Constantin Brancusi whose assistant he became in 1927. He was also influenced by Alexander Calder, Alberto Giacometti, Joan Miro, and Pablo Picasso in his Surrealist phase. In the 1930s Noguchi was, with Calder, one of the most advanced sculptors working in the United States" (Read 1985:241).

Ainu Fabric Art *continued*

and on their faces to protect them from evil spirits—and serve as signs of maturity and respectability.³

That Peramonkoro (1897–1971), Bikky's mother, taught him to create designs and work on fabrics shows her independent spirit; it also provided him with a reservoir of imagery on which to draw from in his work. Even though she passed away over thirty years ago, she continues to be a role model today, inspiring contemporary artists such as Noriko Kawamura who is creating incredible complex fine textile art, bringing traditional abstract art to the next level in large wall treatments.⁴



Fig. 2.5.3: women's tattoos.

Sidebar Notes

1. Dubreuil (2002)
2. M. Kodama (1987:83).
3. Dubreuil (1999a, 2002)
4. Dubreuil (1999b, 2003)

7. Miki (1990:120–1).
8. Interview with Mineko Kano, April 23, 1994.
9. Bikky met many forward-thinking intellectuals at the home of Kazuo and Mitsuko Arita. Kazuo Arita was a successful architect and a patron of the arts, and he and his wife would feed the struggling young intellectuals and participate in lively discussions about life and art. The Aritas became Bikky's confidants, helping him as he desperately tried to overcome the prejudice he had experienced due to his Ainu heritage. Bikky's relationship with the Aritas lasted throughout his life, and they were in close contact with each other. Kazuo Arita spoke at the second annual Talk-about-Trees Exhibition, and their son, Yasugi, became one of Bikky's assistants from 1980–1982.
10. Munroe (1994:189).
11. For many years Shibuzawa would send Bikky copies of his published work in magazines, and autographed copies of his books. Bikky had a great deal of respect for Shibuzawa (interview Junko Takagi, May 13, 1995).
12. Other members of the salon included Shuntaro Matsuyama (b. 1930), a scholar on the Indian subcontinent; Shuzo Takiguchi (1903–1979), poet, art critic, and painter; Ikuya Kato (b. 1929), poet; Yuri Nonaka (b. 1938), painter; and several others.
13. Interview with Mitsuko Arita, May 14, 1995.
14. See note no 1.
15. Interview with Mineko Kano, April 23, 1994.
16. Yamakawa (1988:188).
17. Echizen (1994b:84).
18. Yamakawa (1988:186–7).
19. Interview with Mineko Kano April 23, 1994.
20. Bikky's brother, Kazuo Sunazawa, himself a carver and an illustrator of traditional Ainu scenes, now owns and operates the gift shop. The name of the shop is "SUNAZAWA AINU CRAFTWORK, KOA-KANNO - BIKKY," an unselfish statement of love and respect for his father and his brother.
21. Bikky never gave up painting and drawing. In fact, while there were no records kept, he sold far more paintings and drawings than sculptures. Over the years he made many hundreds if not thousands of paintings, and the sale of his paintings paid not only household expenses, but they financed his carving activities. One collector, Shinobu Ishijima, has more than five hundred paintings and drawings, and forty sculptures (interview with S. Ishijima, July 29, 1995).
22. Yamakawa (1988:187).
23. Ossip Zadkine (1890–1967) was a sculptor born in Smolensk. He studied in Sunderland, London, and in 1909 at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris. "In Paris he formed a deep admiration for Rodin, but the most immediate impact upon him was that of Cubism. For a few years he experimented—like Lipchitz, Laurens and Archipenko—with a disciplined analysis of the figure into an austere geometric arrangement of solids. In the 1920s his forms took on an essentially expressive significance, e.g. Prometheus, a fusion of figure and flame, and the torso of *Orpheus* (1949) and *The Destroyed City* (1951–3)." (Read 1985:349).
24. Hammacher 1959:introduction.
25. Shigeru Ueki (1913–1984) was born in Sapporo, Hokkaido. He learned avant-garde art such as Cubism and Dadaism by himself. He studied painting with Kotaro Migishi (1903–1934), but when he made a trip to Nara, and saw *Chiken-in* of *Dainichi-nyorai* in Toshō-daiji, he was moved by it and he began studying sculpture by himself. He submitted many of his works in various exhibitions including the Sao Paulo Biennale and Venice Biennale. He was known as a pioneer abstract sculptor (The catalogue, *Hito to Kaze to Kamigai* 1993:20).
26. Bikky had met and conversed with Okamoto on at least one occasion, and while Bikky had great respect for Okamoto, he had no interest in his art (interview with Junko Takagi, May 14, 1995).

27. Miki (1990:121). Exhibitions of all types, including very important art exhibitions, are regularly held in large department stores throughout Japan. There is almost always dedicated exhibition space in department stores. Attendance at department store exhibitions is nearly always extremely high.
28. Sugimura (1990).
29. *Asahi Shimbun*, (November 22 1960).
30. *Asahi Shimbun* (August 28, 1988).
31. Echizen (1994b:85).
32. Yamakawa (1988:187).
33. Tamon Miki (b. 1929) was a director of the National Museum of International Art and an established art critic of modern sculptural field.
34. Miki (1963:70–1).
35. *Hokkai Times* (January 30, 1980).
36. Yamakawa (1988:187).



Frontispiece: Bikky being interviewed by a newspaper reporter in April 1974.

The Back of the Mask: Art and Activism in Sapporo (1964-1978)

*It is said that a devil is “an asking person” and “a stranger.”
A mask is “a stranger” who doesn’t have characteristic
features or specific appearances. It always asks us if we know
who it is. Make the mask turn around. The content of the
mask is empty. It is filled with emptiness. How can the
characteristic human face endure such a complete emptiness?¹*

If Bikky’s years in Tokyo had been a time for him to grow artistically, socially, and intellectually, the next decade and a half was a time of frustration and, he believed, wasted energy. During this period, however, Bikky gained a deeper understanding of his Ainu identity and connected it to themes that would thread through his artwork for the rest of his life.

Bikky had moved his family from Tokyo to Asahikawa City in Hokkaido around 1960 and shuttled them back and forth between Asahikawa and Sapporo several times before relocating there in 1964. He would live in the prefectural capital for the next fourteen years. Although his work was being shown in one-man shows in galleries in Tokyo and Sapporo and gaining increasing critical recognition, he could not make a living from selling his fine art pieces. He turned instead to the modestly lucrative but unfulfilling task of creating Ainu tourist art and selling the pieces through the *Kitanibon*

Sidebar 6

Ainu Art and The Japanese Art Establishment

The attitude reflected in the traditional Japanese art field for Ainu art has typically been one of disdain. Many Japanese art critics have stereotyped all Ainu art as tourist art while others have categorized Ainu art as merely being ethnographic artifacts. One of the reasons for this attitude is that Japanese art historians have applied the canonical criteria established in the Western hierarchical classification system since the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Following this evaluation system, Ainu art is regarded in the category of “low” craft or applied art with the bulk of the pieces created by “anonymous” artists. The contrasting terminology “art” versus “craft” draws dichotomous boundaries between “high Japanese art” over “low Ainu craft.”

The earliest substantial contribution to the study of Ainu art came in the work of

Continues on page 32

Ainu Art and The Japanese Art Establishment *continued*

Sugiyama Sueo (1885–1946), an industrial designer and an owner of a design company, who authored and published *Ainu no Mon'yo* (Ainu Design Motifs) in 1926.¹ This book was the first Japanese effort to examine and analyze Ainu material culture as art work. In the 1940s Sugiyama and the Japanese scholar of the Ainu, Kindaichi Kyosuke (1882–1971) compiled all available research into three volumes, *Ainu no Geijutsu* (Ainu Art). The first volume was a survey of Ainu textiles published in 1941; the second was on woodcarvings (1942); and the third was on metal work and lacquerware (1943). These books contain many illustrations along with extensive information and initiated a new interest in Ainu art among academics.

Since then, little has been published in either Japan or the West on Ainu art, especially Ainu contemporary art. Modern artists have not been recognized or critically appraised; without important critiques by art critics, art historians, and the viewing public, recognition of traditional and contemporary Ainu creative efforts as art remains problematic.² However, in recent years some Ainu contemporary artists have begun to publish art books of their own work as a statement of their artistic identity. Examples include works by Nuburi Toko (1995), Mutsumi Chiri and Takao Yokoyama (1995), and Sanae Ogawa and Machiko Kato (1996).

Sidebar Notes

1. Sugiyama (1926, 1934, 1940).
2. Dubreuil (1999b, 2003).

Mingei-sha (the Kitanihon Folkcraft Company), which filled much of his time.² His ability to produce his large-scale work was also affected by suffering through several years of devastating vision and balance problems that prevented him from producing any artwork—problems brought on by a head injury he suffered while drinking. His constant drinking and womanizing disrupted his relationship with his second wife and their children, who were raised, essentially fatherless, in Asahikawa.

“Tentacle (a maze)”

Beginning in 1964, when Bikky first moved to Sapporo, he began to pursue the first of the sculptural themes that had evolved from the “Animal” series. In his “Tentacle (a maze)” series he created mysterious forms that invited viewers to handle them. Tentacle-like projections appear in some of Bikky’s earliest known drawings (see Fig. 1.4) and primordial biological structures fascinated Bikky. However, the biomorphic forms of the sculptures did not look like “any of a variety of long, slender, flexible growths, as about the head or mouth of some invertebrate animals” as defined by Webster’s dictionary; they did, however, invoke the action of those protrusions, recalling the way an octopus or squid touches and almost seems to fondle its food.

He intentionally put the word “maze” in parentheses to

evoke the audience’s journey through an exhibition of his work.

Bikky believed that sculpture demanded to be touched. The tactile sense and the action of touching created a different way of seeing sculpture.

He explained:

People should appreciate sculptures by touching them, but there is always an ironclad rule not to touch sculptures in exhibitions. Although the sense of sight is central to modern times, I wondered if I could grasp the deeper root meaning of human beings from the other

*degenerated tactile senses. This is how I developed the tentacle theme. As I said, sculptures are not to be just seen but to be touched with the hands. You get into a dark exhibition hall while touching the sculptures with your hands and you eventually find your way out of the room—you've walked through a "maze" of sculpture that you see your way through with your hands. That thought led to my maze theme.*³

Bikky would sometimes cover his work with black cloth and let the public touch the sculpture with their hands under the cloth.⁴ He also encouraged the public not only to touch the work with their hands, but also to play with and rearrange his work. For example, some of Bikky's "Tentacle (a maze)" works are formed from interlocking pieces carved out of a single piece of wood. Apart, each piece might appear to represent simple biological forms such as chromosomes or amoebas; together, depending on how they are arranged and the angle from which they are viewed, they appear to be men and women embracing, animals wrestling, or raw energy twisting and writhing. Bikky wanted the movable elements to stimulate the public's imagination and give the viewers new experiences or relationships with the sculptures. He wanted to convey through touching the wood the Ainu belief that all things in nature, animate or inanimate, have a kinship with humans. He also wanted to stimulate senses more often used by animals than humans:

"The more you focus on the tactile sense as a theme, the more endless the concept becomes. It eventually becomes visual. Although the struggle is continuous, the point of view from the tactile sense is always there."⁵

One of the *Tentacle* works that still exists was submitted to the Artist's Union Exhibition at the Tokyo City Museum in 1976 (Fig. 3.1). The large piece is composed of several movable sculptural forms connected with wooden pegs, allowing it to be



Fig. 3.1: Surviving *Tentacle* piece.

folded, bent, and stretched to create many variations. For instance, if it is folded in half or in thirds, it appears to be a person hugging him or herself or two people embracing. When folded into a very tight, firm, and stable position, there is a feeling of fluid motion. When it is unfolded, it turns into an unstable and fragile piece, devoid of life. Viewers were invited to play with it and create their own forms and images.

Unfortunately, only a few of the “Tentacle (a maze)” works still exist. To Bikky, the process of creating his sculptures was almost more important than the end product. Bikky did not care greatly what happened to his sculptures once he had finished the process of creating them—for example, many of the 1970s “Tentacle (a maze)” works were stolen from an open truck after a major exhibition while he went drinking with friends.

His emphasis on the process of artistic creation was no doubt because he had a sensual relationship with the wood he was carving. He likened it to his relationship to the many women in his life. In a letter to a friend he wrote, “The finer the quality of wood becomes, the more like a woman it becomes. I know it’s a terrible thing to say, but I enjoy how the wood changes when I have, what amounts to, an intimate (sensual) relationship with the wood. My new studio will be the place to make love to the wood.”⁶

Bikky’s Tourist Art

In 1967, to support his wife Junko and their three small children, Bikky began working under an exclusive contract with the Kitanihon Mingei-sha (the Kitanihon Folkcraft Company). In Hokkaido Bikky was well known for his extremely innovative wooden jewelry incised with modernized Ainu designs, the so-called “Bikky patterns” (*Bikky mon’yo*). Even though the company hired him for his “star quality” and didn’t expect a great deal of work from him, Bikky produced an unbelievable amount of tourist art, mostly jewelry, during this period. He was extremely prolific, even when drinking.

In the summer of 1967 Bikky made his own workshop in an enclosed space in the company’s warehouse. In this tiny workshop he made a bed from an old horse sleigh and brought in his books and tools. One of his friends described Bikky’s routine at that time:

When I visited his studio, it was like a rag-and-bone shop. Bikky often dozed in a closet or in the chair in the daytime. He usually went to Susukino [the nightlife district in Sapporo] to drink. His creation of art was done from midnight till the morning light after drinking.⁷

Even with his many distractions, he produced rings, necklaces, earrings, never using the same design twice. Bikky's jewelry sold extremely well even though it was priced up to ten times more than other artists' work. He also produced large numbers of carved wooden insects, reptiles, and fish using a relief technique (Fig. 3.2). These charming pieces have articulated segments such as wings, tails, heads, and joints, all pegged with wooden nails and carved with intricate Ainu designs using the *makiri*, the traditional Ainu carving tool.

Tetsuji Takeishi, the Kitanihon Folkcraft Company's managing director, said that by using the *makiri*, Bikky couldn't carve the precise circles possible with a modern chisel and that his circles were usually irregular. Bikky did not try to create exact circles, but he certainly had the technical skill required to do so. When he created abstract art, he still carved in the traditional Ainu manner. The result is somewhat irregular, capturing the distinctive rhythm that no one could copy. Bikky also created the unique algae color that coated the recessed surface of the designs, adding depth and emphasizing the relief designs. The color, looking very much like the green of old copper, was achieved through a mixture of pigments and oil stains.

Bikky also created several statues depicting traditional Ainu elders, although in the beginning he didn't particularly like creating these stereotyped images.⁸ He also carved an



Fig. 3.2: Carved insects.

exquisite scene of confrontation between an Ainu elder and a bear from a tree stump (Fig. 3.3). The sculpture creates a moment of deep tension showing the life and death struggle of a hunter and his prey. The bear's hind leg is raised in space, which suggests a moment frozen in time, depicting action and pain. The sense of



Fig. 3.3: Bear and Hunter (*Ekashi*), 1973.

spontaneity, the capturing of the awesome moment of death, makes us voyeurs of this powerful scene.

Bikky was good at using any piece of wood that found its way to his hands and believed that fate brought wood to him to be revived by his hands. His first deliberate experimentation at a totem pole as a concept resulted from a piece that had fallen from a dump truck, an object that would start him on a trip that would ultimately change his life. The idea of using the totem-pole

format was probably planted in his subconscious by the art critic Miki, who had used that term to describe an early work by Bikky years before. However, Kenichi Kawamura, cultural leader of the Asahikawa band of Ainu and a family friend, stated that Bikky was also influenced by images he had seen in *National Geographic*.⁹

That first totem experiment, carved in 1972 (Fig. 3.4), was two meters high. The pole depicts an Ainu elder, an owl, a pair of birds, and a bear. To those familiar with the art of Canada's Northwest Coast Indians the work does not look like a totem pole, but to the Ainu and Japanese, who had little knowledge of totem poles, it did.

Although Bikky was proud of the quality of his work for the Kitanihon Folkcraft Company, his eyesight was starting to fail, hampering his ability to do



Fig. 3.4: Totem Pole.

settlement in Hokkaido. The Japanese pioneering spirit was symbolized by four standing men identified with the titles of *The Surge* (as a wave coming ashore), *The Earth, A Fertile Plain*, and *The North Wind*, while the aboriginal Ainu was illustrated by an elderly Ainu man entitled *The Kotan* (Ainu village). The man knelt at the feet of the Japanese pioneers, pointing to guide their way. The

the fine, close-up work that he relied on for a steady livelihood.¹⁰ For this and a variety of other reasons, he created very little fine art between 1967 and 1974. He found the work physically difficult; even though he was only in his forties. His difficulty with relationships was taking its toll with his second marriage disintegrating. Always a heavy drinker, he was now drinking to an excess on a regular basis, with drink becoming both the cause, and the effect, of his marital problems. As an additional distraction, he became embroiled in Ainu political causes, just as his parents had done many years before.¹¹

Bikky's Activism

During the 1970s the Ainu demand for equality and justice exploded, championed by the Ainu Liberation League and sympathetic Japanese. The movement coalesced in 1970 around a bronze monument, designed by Japanese sculptor Shin Hongo, which was to be erected in Asahikawa's Joban Park as a monument to the centennial of Japanese

Sidebar 7

The Bear in Ainu Tourist Art

Almost all curio shops in Hokkaido sell bear carvings, exotic souvenirs of the "vanishing" Ainu race. The *iyomante* (bear spirit-sending ceremony) is known



to many Japanese through magazines, books, and even a song called *Iyomante no Yoru* (Night of the *Iyomante*) popular in the 1940s and 1950s that conjure a romanticized image of the Ainu as noble savages.

Traditionally, the Ainu never carved naturalistic images of humans and animals,

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Fig. 3.5: The Statue of *Fusetsu no Gunzo* (Wind and Snow Group) by Shin Hongo, 1970 (1977).

implication was clear: the Japanese were the future of Hokkaido, not the Ainu (Fig. 3.5). This insensitivity enraged the Ainu community, and the artist's vague and arrogant response created further hostility, as did his design change to show the Ainu elder sitting on a stump, suggesting to the Ainu that they would always look up to the Japanese.

When the statue was unveiled in the park, Bikky distributed protest handbills in downtown Asahikawa:

Why did the Ainu have to sit down in the kotan! Can't (the artist) make a composition in which all the figures are the same height? ...

*The Japanese images were illustrated as *The Surge*, *The Earth*, *A Fertile Plain*, and *The North Wind*. What a triumphant and boundless space these images create! Compare them with the image of the Ainu, the title of the *Kotan* sounds so restricted. Why did we, the Ainu, have to sit down and stay in the kotan! Hokkaido used to belong to us, didn't it?*

It is o.k. to celebrate the centennial, but the Japanese aren't the only people who struggled. We, the Ainu, struggled, too, and these past one hundred years were the time of our humiliation. However, we try to get rid of the humiliation, and the Ainu are also standing, pointing at the modern consciousness.

Can we, the Ainu, proudly take a memorial picture in front of this statue? No!

As long as the Ainu have to sit down and stay in the kotan, this monument can't rid us of the abominable way the Japanese have treated the Ainu. The artist and the leaders of the city should understand this. signed Bikky Sunazawa.¹²

In October 1972 the statue was destroyed by explosives. An Ainu ethnological display on the University of Hokkaido campus was also blown up at the same time. Because of Bikky's political activity, the police immediately suspected him and unsuccessfully attempted to gather evidence against him. Between 1972 to 1974, many violent demonstrations were carried out in the name of Ainu liberation including the bombing of the world headquarters of both the Mitsui and Mitsubishi Companies in Tokyo and the stabbing of the mayor of Shiraoi, home of the biggest Ainu museum and tourist attractions in Hokkaido. However, many of these incidents were later proved to be done by Japanese liberation groups such as the Japanese Red Army Faction, without the political support of the Ainu.¹⁴

Generally, Bikky didn't like belonging to any organized group, nor to be associated with them. He was especially critical of the Hokkaido Utari Association.¹³ He believed that some Ainu belonged to the Association simply to get benefits without trying

The Bear in Ainu Tourist Art continued

believing that the images could be possessed by bad gods and harm people. They did, however, carve stylized *kimunkamuy*, the bear god of the mountains, on prayer sticks, ceremonial headdresses, and sacred items used for ritual purposes such as the bear *inoka*, used by the Sakhalin Ainu for the purpose of promoting fecundity of bears needed for the *iyomante*.¹

The Ainu began carving bears for sale in the early 1900s.² It must have been difficult for the Ainu to carve such a sacred object for profit for the Japanese, but the Ainu realized they had to adapt to changing times. While many Ainu had carved the bear in miniature as part of the *ikupasuy* (prayer sticks, see Sidebar 3) and still more had carved a bear head as part of their headdress, no one had carved a full bear's body in a larger scale or in a realistic pose. This proved a problem at first. The earliest bears were far from being a faithful representation of the animal—one scholar noted that they often looked like pigs or alligators!³

The bear-carving skills of the Ainu progressed rapidly, however, and by the early 1920s Umetaro Matsui (1901–1949) (Fig. 3.7.2), from the Chikabumi *kotan*, (Ainu settlement) emerged as a celebrated bear carver. Matsui's bears capture the animal's awesome power and showed it as a formidable foe in the wild; it's obvious that he observed bears in nature.



Fig. 3.7.2: Photo of Umetaro Matsui.

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Fig. 3.6: Ainu Flag, 1973.

to understand their policies. He was very troubled that some Ainu were so secure in the Association that they were stuck in a narrow world view of victims of discrimination, and he believed that some Ainu would never leave the *kotan* mentally. He could not stand that they were willing to just live in the past. He truly believed if you have something to say, you should say it independently without the support from a political organization.¹⁵

Although Bikky generally preferred independent action to belonging to organizations, he was persuaded to stand as chairman to the January 1973 National Ainu Conference held in Sapporo. He also participated in the 44th Pan-Hokkaido United Labor Day Rally in May. “I’ve never participated in this kind of organized racial rally before,” Bikky told a reporter. “As

our racial consciousness grows, I want to appeal to the Ainu to gain awareness of our situation and be proud of being Ainu.”¹⁶ Marchers prepared placards that focused on the major issues of the Ainu such as “Let the last unspoiled wilderness (Mount Daisetsu) be in our hands,” and “Represent true Ainu history in school textbooks.” They also hoisted the “Ainu flag” designed by Bikky with a red arrowhead accentuated by a white design symbolizing the deep snow of Hokkaido, against the intense blue of the sky. An arrowhead embodies the spirit of the *iyomante*, the bear ceremony. Bikky walked with the flag at the head of the procession (Fig. 3.6).

In June 1973 a monthly newspaper *A-utari Ainu* (We human beings) was published for the first time. Edited by younger Ainu activists, the journal

reexamined Ainu cultural identity. Bikky designed a logo and carved woodcut illustrations. Unfortunately, the newspaper ceased publication in 1976.

While he was gaining public trust and admiration, Bikky's private life was in turmoil. He didn't engage in any public artistic activities—except for one Tentacle exhibition in 1973 in Tokyo—during the period he was working in the Kitanihon Folkcraft Company to make a living. He was frustrated with his situation as an artist. He wanted to be a successful modern sculptor, but he couldn't sell his larger abstract work, especially in Sapporo. To make matters worse, because of his financial difficulties, he couldn't afford to buy high-quality wood and had no room in his workshop for large-scale work. He often complained to his wife Junko that if he couldn't create modern sculptures, he didn't feel like he was being true to himself.¹⁷ Moreover, it caused the

estrangement between him and his family to worsen day by day. Bikky was depressed, drinking heavily, and womanizing compulsively.



Fig. 3.7: Lip Mask.

The Bear in Ainu Tourist Art *continued*

In 1933 Matsui received a special award at the Ainu Craftwork Art Exhibition sponsored by the Hokkaido Prefectural Office. This honor was surpassed in 1936 when he was asked to carve a bear for presentation to Emperor Hirohito who was making an official visit to Asahikawa. Due to the Emperor's acceptance of the gift, the bear carvings of the Chikabumi Ainu became famous in Japan and greatly increased the sales of all Ainu tourist art. Matsui began putting his signature on his work from this point on.⁴

In the 1930s, a Japanese modern sculptor, Kensei Kato (1894–1966), was invited to Asahikawa several times to give the Ainu carvers guidance and training.⁵ This gave the Ainu carvers a “formal” artistic background that included design and composition, and this experience seemed to have a strong impact on the art of bear carving. Because of his reputation as a master carver, and because he was one of the most important cultural leaders, one of these trained carvers was probably Bikky Sunazawa's father, Koa-kanno, who lived in the Chikabumi *kotan*.

In 1937 the Hokkaido Industrial Experimental Laboratory tried to create a larger variety of designs worthy of

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The “*Ki-men*” (Wooden Mask) Series

In 1975 Bikky finally worked through his depression, stimulated by masks Takeji Takahashi brought back from a business trip to Bangkok and Singapore.¹⁸ Bikky began by carving masks developed around variations on the Japanese kanji character *ki*.¹⁹ Bikky named the theme *Ki-men*, in which the character *ki* means “wood,” and *men* means “mask.” Like his other series, *Ki-men* continued his exploration of visual and tactile elements

The Bear in Ainu Tourist Art *continued*

Hokkaido's natural beauty. For instance, they created various products with bear motifs.⁶ It remains unclear how many of the experimental products were actually merchandised in the markets, but it contributed a great deal to the tourist industries in Hokkaido in 1938 and to the formation of the Ainu Folkcraft Organization in the same year. World War II curtailed the market for tourist art, but Asahikawa City did not suffer any war damage. Immediately after the war the Asahikawa Folkcraft Organization began producing woodcarvings to answer the market demands from the American soldiers of the Occupation Forces.⁷ The product line now included practical items that were produced for the Americans. Almost all items were created with a design that had something to do with bears, killer whales, salmon, or with traditional Ainu designs. Bikky, as a young Ainu artist who began to work in this era, refused to follow these trends and as he so often did, created his own way, revolutionizing Ainu tourist art as he did so.

Today Ainu carvers such as Takeki Fujito (b. 1934) create wildlife fine art of the highest order. The work of Fujito, the most respected and successful of the Ainu wildlife artists, is found throughout the world. While he creates all manner of animals in the Ainu spiritual pantheon, and other representational art such as life-

of human and animal bodies that he had pursued in *Animal and Tentacle (a maze)*.

Some masks appeared to be pictorial symbols, while others look like wild imaginary creatures. Some are very simple shapes, such as circles. Others have a sensual quality, such as the mask in Fig. 3.7 that has lip-like shapes carved down its entire surface, while others appear to be human genitalia. These shapes suggest intimacy and life, supporting Bikky's notion that wood is a "living thing." Bikky explained in an interview, "I wanted to express both faces of masks—the front and the back."²⁰ He worked both sides of the masks with deep, rhythmic chisel marks, observing that "I finally understood that the greater element of a mask was the back side."²¹

Ki-men was also influenced by the word play of Bikky's abstract essays and poems. He played with the visual forms of *ki* just as he played with words in his poetry. The *ki* image was sometimes created using just a hint of the character's shape or a fragment taken from its meaning and developed into several specific images first by sketching the abstract form. As with most of his carvings, the object rarely changed significantly from the final sketch.

Between 1975 and 1979 Bikky created as many as one hundred and fifty masks, all using the pale wood of the walnut tree (*Gastrolina thoracica*), which is native to Hokkaido. Bikky pursued the *Ki-men* series for the pure joy of a personal creative challenge, part of his constant urge to experiment with his art.

Kamuy-mintar (The Playground of the Gods)

In the summer of 1976 Bikky decided to escape from city life in Sapporo and think about the course of his life and his artwork. He was forty-five and realized he needed time to decide what to do next. He camped in Uzun outside of Asahikawa City, where he and his father struggled to farm after World War II. It

was also where he had awakened to the joys of the abstract manner of sketching and confronted his own feelings of inferiority caused by racial prejudice. This three-month period of isolation gave him a tremendous opportunity to find himself. Bikky pitched a tent, built a rock hearth, and bathed in the river. He returned to Sapporo spiritually refreshed and ready to resume his work.

Almost immediately he received a commission to create a work for the Komakusa-so, an indoor *onsen* (hot springs) for the Hokkaido Prefecture City Staff Mutual Aid Union. The commissioner, Tetsuo Endo, was a former director of the Asahikawa Local Museum who knew Bikky. Endo was having a hard time filling a large wall space in the lobby of the *onsen* and asked Bikky to come and take a look at the space. Bikky did and telephoned a couple days later, "If you find a large log of *sen* (*Caster aralia*), I will do it."²²

The first thing Bikky did was to bring in an old horse-drawn sleigh to be used as his bed and put it in front of the space where the work would hang. Endo described Bikky sitting in the sleigh, staring at the space in the hall for a long time while drinking whiskey. If he got tired he slept on the sleigh. He made many sketches, and when he began carving, he would work for awhile and then run his rough hands gently, sensitively over the wood, his eyes becoming very emotional.

Bikky named the work *Kamuy-mintar*, the playground of the gods, and it came to be one of Bikky's favorite works. He would often return to the *onsen* to be close to it.²³ Bikky explained what the sculpture meant to him:

Several years ago I came back to Hokkaido because I realized how strongly I was attracted to Hokkaido's wilderness. Mt. Daisetsu looked like a father opening his hands wide to welcome the summer. In winter the mountain showed its severe monochromatic colors. Our

The Bear in Ainu Tourist Art *continued*

size statue of Ainu elders, he considers himself a simple "bear carver." Fujito, the ultimate role model, challenges other wildlife artists to move away from the craft production of the stereotypical tourist bear. As the Ainu culture experiences a revitalization, the challenge is being met.⁸

Sidebar Notes

1. M. Kono (1985:15).
2. K. Saito (1979); Ohtsuka (1982); Ishijima (1979, 1981).
3. Arai (1992:82); K. Saito (1979:4).
4. Ishijima (1981:11–12).
5. Kensei Kato was born in 1894 in Gifu prefecture, but his family moved to Hokkaido after his birth. He graduated from Kamikawa Junior High School in Asahikawa city. He worked as a substitute teacher in the Ubus Elementary School from 1913, while living in the lodgings of a farm house near the school. He devoted himself to teaching, but was inspired by the tutoring of sculptor Teijiro Nakahara (1888–1921) and he entered Art School in Tokyo in 1915. He studied under Koun Takamura (1852–1934). He was later selected to be one of the Nitten judges. He received an Art Academy Prize in 1951 and he became a member of the Art Academy in 1962. He passed away in 1966 at the age of 74 (K. Saito 1980:3).
6. Ohtsuka (1982:16).
7. Ibid.:17; Ishijima (1980a:3–4)
8. Dubreuil (1999b, 2003).

Ainu Utari [brotherhood] called it “a garden where the gods play” and I was swallowed up in its magnificence.

I symbolized the flying butterflies over the flower gardens of Mt. Daisetsu in the upper portion of the sculpture. I also symbolized the “autumn horse mackerels” [a fish] going upstream in the Ishikari River that comes from Mt. Daisetsu in the lower portion of the sculpture. After I finished it and looked at the building site again, I realized the building was placed on a gorgeous site!²⁴

Kamuy-mintar (Fig. 3.8), which may be the first piece of work Bikky named in the Ainu language, was a turning point for Bikky. In the past he hated to be referred to as the “Ainu” modern sculptor. He didn’t like to be treated differently because of his being Ainu and avoided native themes or titles in his work (with some notable exceptions). He didn’t like viewers to see his work with

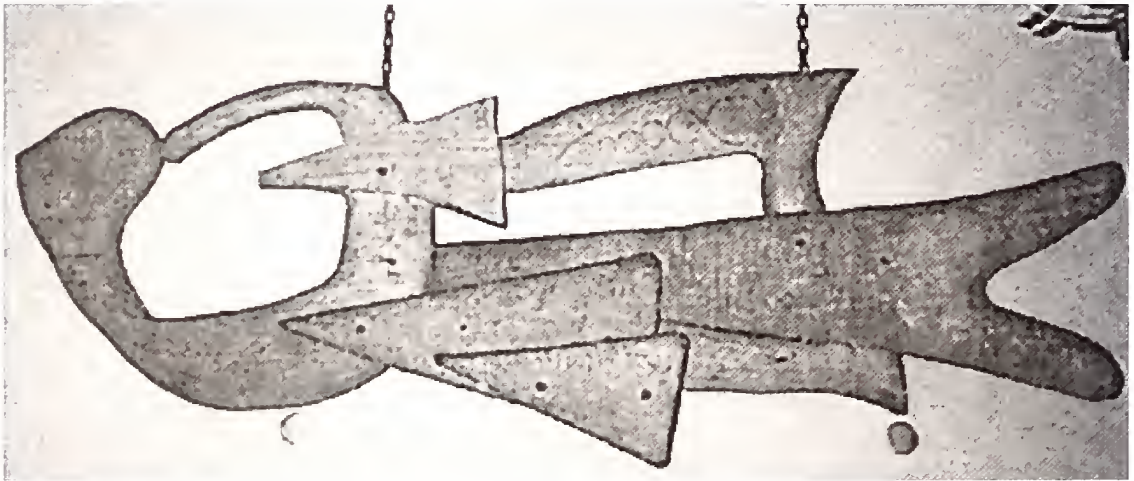


Fig 3.8: *Kamuy-mintar*, 1977.

a fixed concept or an expectation of being something Ainu. His personal view of art was that “whether the artwork is good or not has nothing to do with being an Ainu or being a Japanese. Good artwork is just good.”²⁵ When he depicted the mysticism of his connection to Mount Daisetsu, he couldn’t use anything but Ainu words—the poetic quality of its title sounds like the soft echoing of the gods at play.

In 1978, the year after he created *Kamuy-mintar*, his life took a dramatic turn. He divorced his second wife in May, dating his soon-to-be third wife Ryoko

before the dissolution. At the end of September Bikky held a one-man show in a gallery in Sapporo, where he met the director of the high school in Otoineppu, a very small village located in a remote northern district of Hokkaido.²⁶ The director, Takashi Kano, asked Bikky to come and see the village, which is surrounded by forests.²⁷ When Bikky visited Otoineppu a month later he fell in love with the magnificent natural environment. The village administrators, believing that an association with Bikky, the well-known carver, would be good for the village, suggested that Bikky use an abandoned elementary school as his studio. Bikky desperately wanted to escape from his creative slump and immediately made up his mind to seize this opportunity. In November, he moved to Otoineppu from Sapporo. Otoineppu was already in the beginning of a severe winter. The stage was set for the most profound change in his life.

End Notes

1. Shibuzawa (1990:156–61).
2. The Kitanihon Folkcraft Company is one of the largest suppliers of Ainu tourist art, and in 1993 the company made a net profit of six million dollars. It is owned by a Japanese businessman and currently all of its carvers and other employees are Japanese. Ainu carvers have difficulty finding outlets for their work without going through a Japanese wholesaler.
3. *Asahi Shimbun* (August 28, 1988). Shigeru Kayano, cultural leader of the Nibutani band of Ainu, mentioned at Bikky's wake: "I was asked to create Ainu art work for the University of Hokkaido. Bikky was visiting me, observing what I was doing, for a week or so. I happened to look up and I saw Bikky 'looking' at the work with his eyes closed, slowly and lightly running his hands over the art. I was surprised as I watched Bikky, as I never saw anyone look so deeply at something with their eyes closed. Later in the week Bikky made me a bell which I still have in my room." (March 1989:54).
4. *Asahi Shimbun* (April 6, 1974).
5. B. Sunazawa, *Tē* (Hands), from the catalogue of *Ikki-tashoku* (1988).
6. Personal correspondence with Katsumi Yazaki, October 24, 1981. Yazaki is an artist and a filmmaker in Sapporo. The language used to describe wood in the letter is that of a man addressing a respected and honored lover.
7. Ishikawa (1989).
8. Bikky would, in later life, go on to make very fine examples of the *ekashi*, the male Ainu elders.
9. Interview, Kenichi Kawamura (October 1985). A check of back issues of *National Geographic* showed two editions, January 1945 and March 1972, that featured Haida and other Northwest tribal art. The 1945 issue had a series of paintings that emphasized traditional scenes of Northwest Coast life such as a pole-raising ceremony at a Haida village. The 1972 issue shows a Haida carver, Rufus Moody, working on a model totem pole. The 1972 issue also shows a scene of decaying totem poles in the island, which would affect Bikky a great deal in a few years. Of the many totem poles Bikky carved, he never copied or duplicated a totem pole from Canada's Northwest Coast or from any other culture that has "totem poles." It was the concept of vertically stacked images overlapping and interacting with each other that intrigued Bikky.

10. Interview with Takeji Takahashi (April 8, 1994).
11. Interview with Katsumi Yazaki (April 15 and 20, 1994).
12. A copy of the handbill can be found in the Asahikawa City Library.
13. In 1946 the pan-Hokkaido Ainu Conference was held in Shizunai and established the Hokkaido Ainu Association. Its purpose was to improve and develop the social welfare of the Ainu. However, while their activity was stagnant for a time, a general meeting was held in 1960 and re-established the Association in 1961. Its name was changed to the Hokkaido Utari Association from the Hokkaido Ainu Association. The meaning of the Ainu was originally “the humans,” but it was misused as a discriminatory word by the Japanese government, and some Ainu had a feeling of the resistance to the word. So they changed the name to the *Utari* which meant “brotherhood.” The Hokkaido Utari Association is the largest Ainu organization in Japan and it has about 16,000 memberships (Asaji, Miyatake, and Nakama 1993:92–3).
14. Sanders (1986:137–8).
15. While critical of the Utari Association, he nevertheless lent his name and energy whenever called upon.
16. *Asahi Shimbun* (May 1, 1973).
17. Interview Junko Sunazawa (April 25, 1994).
18. Takeji Takahashi interview (April 18, 1994).
19. There are more than two hundred Chinese characters that have the homonym of the *ki* sound in the Japanese kanji dictionary.
20. *Asahi Shimbun* (July 19, 1976).
21. S. Sekiguchi (1978).
22. T. Endo (1990).
23. Ibid.
24. Bikky Sunazawa (1977).
25. *Asahi Shimbun* (May 13, 1982).
26. Otoineppu means a place where an estuary of the river got muddy in the Ainu language. The village is called a “village of forests,” because more than eighty percent of the village land is filled with forests. The experimental plantation of Hokkaido University Forest is also located nearby (*1992 Otoineppu Village Report*; see map for location).
27. *Asahi Shimbun* (December 29, 1979).



Frontispiece: Bikky standing in front of a piece from his "Juka" series.

Chapter 4

Totem Poles and Tall Trees: Bikky Returns to His Roots (1978-1983)

Wood has an infinite mystery as a material. The average tree around here has 200 growth rings, which means that it has lived four times longer than me and has more words than me. We have to know and listen to it.¹

The town of Otoineppu, only ninety kilometers (fifty-six miles) from Hokkaido's northernmost point, is very cold and very far removed from Sapporo with its museums and galleries—and even farther from Tokyo. It was close, however, to Bikky's beloved trees. Bikky knew as soon as he arrived that he had found his new home, and it was here that he created some of his greatest work.

The environment seemed daunting when he arrived in November 1978. The area was already in the grip of winter—a winter that leaves villagers snow-bound more than six months a year. It is a place where it is normal to have more than two meters (six feet) of snow on the ground, with temperatures well below zero. Bikky lived among the forests in a tiny village of less than fifty people called Osashima, a flat area along the Teshio River. But before long Bikky, Ryoko, and his three children from his second marriage² had the abandoned elementary school that was their new home all set up: he divided the school space into the living and working space; the small gymnasium became the living area; one classroom was turned into his studio, and another became a gallery. It was an unbelievably large space when compared with his small workshop in Sapporo. Bikky named his studio the *Atelier Sanmore*.³

Bikky had easy access in his new studio to raw materials because around him stretched the experimental forest plantation of the Hokkaido University

Forest. The undulating mountains beyond the plantation are filled with old growth forests with a combination of coniferous and deciduous trees. Bikky was very sensitive to the properties of different kinds of wood, “All wood is alive,” he told one art critic, “and different kinds of woods have different personalities.”⁴ In the past it had always been a struggle to find the wood he needed to produce art; this new world with its ready availability of raw material was “like putting a fish back into the water.”⁵

Before long, Bikky had adopted a Glehn’s spruce (*Picea glehnii* Mast) in the forest that inspired him. Older than the other trees, the three-hundred-year-old giant stands more than forty meters (130 feet) high. He visited the tree in his spare moments many times. Because of his love for this tree, his friends and the villagers still call it “Bikky’s tree.” While it isn’t a shrine or a sacred tree in the Shinto sense, people nonetheless visit the tree and find it spiritually uplifting.

The Totem Pole at the Ainu Memorial Museum

Bikky got right to work. He had received a commission to carve a totem pole⁶ to be placed in front of the Ainu Memorial Museum founded by Kaneto Kawamura in Chikabumi *kotan*, Asahikawa, where Bikky had been born and raised.⁷ The museum had been remodeled, and the Ainu people of that area wanted a symbolic work of art depicting the important beliefs of the Ainu for its reopening. The new director of the museum, Kenichi Kawamura, Kaneto Kawamura’s son, asked Bikky to do the work. Bikky designed the pole, but asked Ainu carvers to assist him so that the work would be an Ainu statement, not solely Bikky’s project. The ten-meter pole was erected in April 1979 (Fig. 4.1).

At the top of the pole is the owl, a very powerful protective god of the *kotan*, below that is the *itokpa*, or family crest, of the Kawamuras, a stylized whale’s dorsal fin. Next are prayer instruments for the gods: an *ikupasuy* (prayer-stick) resting on a sake cup and saucer, *tuki*, followed by a dugout canoe. In the open space of the canoe is a brown bear’s head, the god of the mountains, and a killer whale, the god of the seas.⁸



Fig. 4.1: Ainu Memorial Museum totem pole, 1979.

The Talk-about-Trees Exhibition

When Bikky moved to Otoineppu, the villagers—mostly of Japanese descent—thought that a “strange (Ainu) bear carver” had moved to the village. They later found out that he was a sculptor creating contemporary art and that was somehow threatening.⁹ For these and other reasons it was difficult for Bikky to be accepted in such a small community. He needed to have an opportunity to communicate with the villagers, so he and his friends organized a small community event, which was called *Ki o Katari Sakubin-ten* (The Talk-about-Trees Exhibition). In the exhibition, held May 27 through June 1, 1979, Bikky highlighted Otoineppu as the “village of forests.” He showed different kinds of artwork made with wood, exhibiting his own sculpture, including surviving works from his “Tentacle series.”¹⁰ He also asked his artist friends in Tokyo and Sapporo to participate in this event, many of whom were willing to display their paintings, films, poetry, music, and sculpture alongside the work of local high school students and villagers.

The “Talk-about-Trees Exhibition” became a bigger event in the community year by year as the support from the community grew. Soon the village officials began providing the operating budget and the executive committees. Through the years the villagers seemed to gain a respect for and understanding of Bikky’s abstract art, a very different type of artistic expression than they usually appreciated. It helped that Bikky accepted all reactions to his art, good or bad, with equal grace. The exhibition was an annual event until Bikky’s death in 1989.

Bikky helped the community realize that the forest’s resources went beyond timber for building materials by stimulating the villagers’ imagination and creativity. Village officials began to encourage small local industries to produce wooden objects such as fine art, furniture, and craft items and tried to provide the commercial access to sell them as representative of village products. In 1985 the Otoineppu High School was founded to educate gifted teenagers from all over Japan in woodworking and related arts.

The Toh Series and Other Works

Bikky started a new series of simple, abstract sculptures entitled *Toh* (Columnar Shapes) in 1979. The series was based on vertical forms, inspired perhaps by the tall trees around him and the columnar art he had been creating.



Fig. 4.2: *Kami no Shita* (Tongue of God), 1980.

Unlike the smooth finish of many traditional Japanese works, Bikky began covering the entire surface of his work with a tightly controlled, scale-like texture composed from small chisel marks.

The first work in the series, purchased by the village of Otoineppu, and now on display at the high school, consists of two simple *nara* (Japanese oak milled logs), fashioned into a cross, the top of the vertical log split to fit the horizontal log. One commentator suggested that “the form reminds one of Christ hanging on the cross, whose image of the nature’s grandeur is overlapping the god that Bikky learned from his parents.”¹¹ One of Bikky’s close friends said, however, that Bikky had no intention of suggesting a Christian symbol.¹²

In 1980 Bikky built a second studio, a prefabricated steel building in which he installed an overhead traveling crane that allowed him to manipulate large logs. He also installed a saw and power generator.¹³ One of his masterworks, the massive, solid *Kami no Shita* (Tongue of God, Fig. 4.2) was one of the first pieces to be created in his new studio. This large piece (201 x 116 x 54 centimeters or 80 x 45 x 21 inches) looks so natural that it seems to have been brought from the forest as is. Many cracks and stains are prominent in the wood, and it appears to have spent many years exposed to the sun, rain, and wind. The tightly incised chisel marks on the surface invite viewers to touch it with their hands. It seems to be a living thing and the power of its dignified presence is overwhelming.

The shape and title of the *Tongue of God* also suggests the “tongue” of the *ikupasuy*, or prayer-stick, which is carved in a flattened shape and is the most important spiritual article Ainu use to communicate with the gods’ world (see Sidebar 3, page 3). The Ainu consider it a living thing with a soul. In some Ainu regions, artists incise the shape of an arrowhead or triangle into the tapered end of the prayer-stick, which is called the *parunpe*, meaning a tongue. The *parunpe* delivers the message of the prayer to the gods. This monumental and massive tongue might have been created to send a message to the highest ranking god who controls the dispensation of nature’s power.

One of his most successful and interesting works is *Kita no Dobutsu Tachi* (Northern Animals), created in 1980 (Fig. 4.3). The ten abstract pieces of various sizes and shapes are always casually displayed on the floor. The tallest twisted cylinder stands erect and several irregular, abstract shapes of wood surround it. A long log lies on the floor completing the composition. The placement makes the pieces appear to be natural, organic objects brought from the forest. The



Fig. 4.3: *Kita no Dobutsu tachi* (Northern Animals), 1980.

thousands of tiny chisel marks on each piece indicate Bikky's tremendous love of the work. These ten pieces, all wooden animals, are the result of aggressively pushing abstraction from his first drawings of farm animals through the years. The twisted cylinder with one projection might be a deer from the Hokkaido forests and the surrounding small pieces might be abstractions of a fox, rabbit, bear, or other wild animals or animals from Ainu mythology. Although they all are very abstract, Bikky captured the essence of animal forms.

The Otoineppu Tower Totem Pole

In early June of 1980 the Otoineppu Village Office commissioned Bikky to carve a totem pole for the seventieth anniversary of the village. The village officials wanted to symbolize the promotion and the development of the village through the slogan of the "village of forests." Bikky accepted the proposal and a

friend, Makoto Kawakami, owner of the local lumber company, found a four-hundred-year-old Manchurian ash (*tamo*) in the Hokkaido University Forest for him.¹⁴ Bikky immediately made a complete design for the pole that symbolized the local products and industries.

Bikky and four assistants worked feverishly for three months to complete the pole in time for its September 6 unveiling. More than two hundred villagers came to Bikky's studio to pick up the pole using three wagons. They pulled the wagons by hand for more than nine kilometers to the train station. When the totem pole arrived, the station square was filled with seven hundred waiting villagers.¹⁵ It was a memorable experience and brought community pride to the



Fig. 4.4: *Shiko no Tori* (The Birds of Thought), 1981.

villagers who worked together to raise the pole. On the Northwest Coast of North America, a totem-pole-raising is always an exciting event. This raising was no different. The totem pole was named “Otoineppu Tower.” While the pole was aesthetically pleasing, Bikky did not take the area’s fierce winds into account when engineering the pole and it broke into pieces during a horrific winter storm several years later.

At the end of 1980, after three years’ absence, Bikky held a small exhibition entitled “Bikky Riding on A Wooden Horse” in a gallery in Sapporo. He exhibited the unique furniture he created and actually used at home. He had an almost magical ability to transform everyday household items into his own fantastic objects. Several small chairs were connected together, for example, and entitled *Night Train*.

Birds and Wooden Flowers

In 1981 Bikky received a commission from the Otoineppu ski resort to carve three totem poles¹⁶ and another commission from the Nakagawa Experimental Forest of the Hokkaido University for a grouping of three poles, which came to be called the *Shiko no Tori* (The Birds of Thought). An imaginary bird rests on three joined pillars, which symbolize the past, present, and future. They were erected on a snowy November 21, just two days short of the three years since Bikky moved to this area (Fig. 4.4).

While 1981 was a busy year for Bikky, he took time to do some public service by designing another pole for the village that would draw attention to a sign that announced the village's traffic safety record. Acting as a consultant, he did little of the carving, but designed the sign and supervised the work of the local high school students. This kind of generosity was typical of Bikky.

Bikky began a new series in 1982 called *Juka* (Wooden Flowers; Fig. 4.5). In preparation, he spent six months gathering branches from the willow groves



Fig. 4.5: *Juka* (Wooden Flowers), 1989.

along the Teshio River near his home. He cut them every morning and brought them to his studio, where he peeled the bark off each branch. Day after day he would peel them, sometimes with the help of his wife. One day his wife complained to him, “You can’t make a living just peeling the bark off willow branches.” He replied, “You think I’m crazy, but I’m going to do great things. I’m a genius.”¹⁷ Eventually, after six months, his studio was filled with huge piles of willow branches equal to ten two-ton truck loads.

With his raw material in place, the pieces began to take shape. He started with a young tree with only a few branches as a base. Viewers participated in creating the pieces by adding a willow branch from the stack piled next to the base, somewhat like a bird making its nest. Bikky strongly believed that audiences should be allowed to participate in the making of art, to physically and spiritually experience the art, to touch and play, to enjoy. Bikky took particular joy sharing his work with mentally challenged children, giving them the opportunity to participate in the arrangement of the wooden flowers. Their eyes shone as they touched the willow branches, gently adding them to the creation by themselves.

Not only was the art participatory, but it evoked the Ainu *inaw*, a simple tree branch—often willow—finely shaved and tufted at one end and used in Ainu ritual ceremonies (see Sidebar 3, page 3). This icon, beautiful in its simplicity, is a part of the traditional Ainu way of life, and Bikky kept several of them around his house. As nature is at the core of Ainu religion, and because Bikky felt such a spiritual relationship with wood, it is only natural that he would give so much energy to the wooden flower theme. The Ainu believe that after receiving a prayer, the *inaw* turns into a bird to deliver the message. It’s interesting to note that many of Bikky’s later works, regardless of the dominant theme, included birds.

Bikky was still actively producing the *Juka* series at the beginning of 1983. He had no idea that he would find himself creating art thousands of miles away from Ainu country by the end of the year. He would see first-hand the totem poles that had inspired him and find himself at home among the native carvers of the tribes of the Northwest Coast of Canada. This experience was to change the remainder of his life.

End Notes

1. Interview with Bikky, September 1988, on *Nichiyo Bijutsu-kan* broadcast, February 11, 1990.
2. Bikky and his second wife, Junko amicably agreed that the children would stay with him. Soon after they moved to Otoineppu, Bikky's girlfriend, Ryoko, moved in, and after a period of time, they were married.
3. Bikky liked to name his studios. His first studio in Sapporo, actually a room in his house, was named "more" in English, and his studio at the craft company in Sapporo was named "more and more," again in English. *Atelier* means "studio" in French. *San* means "three" in Japanese, so the name means "more, more, and more." (Interview with Makoto Kawakami, January 23, 1995).
4. *Hokkai Times* (December 6, 1980).
5. *Nichiyo Bijutsu-kan* (broadcast February 11, 1990).
6. Although the Ainu did not have the custom of creating totem poles in ancient times, they have been erecting small "totem poles" in the tourist areas since the end of World War II. They remind me of the carved wooden Indian statues that were put in front of cigar stores and other shops in America around the turn of the century and earlier.
7. Kaneto Kawamura (1893–1977) was the hereditary chief and a grandson of the famous Ainu chief Monokute in Peniun-kotan. Kaneto was a well-respected person who contributed a great deal to the Ainu human rights struggle throughout his life. He founded the Ainu Museum in Asahikawa after World War II (Arai Genjiro 1992:65–7). After his death, his son Kenichi inherited the responsibility of managing the museum and preserving the Ainu culture in that area.
8. K. Kawamura (1990).
9. *Hokkaido Shimbun* (June 27, 1981).
10. Bikky completed his tenth "Tentacle" work using a local tree, a Japanese oak, at the end of January, 1979 (*Asahi Shimbun*, January 30, 1979).
11. *Nichiyo Bijutsu-kan* (broadcast February 11, 1990).
12. Interview with Makoto Kawakami (January 12, 1995).
13. *Hokkai Times* (January 29, 1980).
14. Kawakami was more than a friend in the usual sense. Although Bikky had many friends, Kawakami was one of a small group of men that Bikky confided in on all matters. He also spent a great deal of time in the forest with Bikky selecting just the right trees for his many projects.
15. Okamoto (1981).
16. Unfortunately during the mid 1990's a severe storm toppled one of the poles at the ski resort. A new maintenance man, not knowing the importance of the pole, thought it was worthless junk, and burned it.
17. A. Motoi (1994:296).



Frontispiece: Bikky standing next to a totem pole depicting frogs in the Gitksan Tsimshian village of Kitwancool.

Transforming Visions: Bikky and the Northwest Coast of Canada (1983)

When I first met Haida artist Bill Reid, my stereotype of Indians was shattered. Here was a Native person who was successful and respected, someone with pride.¹

A Serendipitous Visit

In the summer of 1983 Bikky was unexpectedly drawn into an adventure that would mark a turning point in both his personal and artistic life. The catalyst for change was Douglas Sanders, Professor of Law at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Sanders, an expert on legal issues concerning Canadian and other indigenous peoples, traveled to Japan to study Ainu radicalism. While lecturing on the Indigenous Protection Act at the University of Hokkaido, he made the acquaintance of Professor Kenji Sanekata, who was on the faculty of Law at the university. Dr. Sanekata and his fiancé Masumi invited Sanders to travel with them in northern Hokkaido. Masumi had read about Bikky and on a whim they dropped by his studio.

Sanders, who collected indigenous art from around the world, had enjoyed the Ainu tourist art he had seen around Hokkaido and recognized the distinctive design elements on the carvings Bikky had in his workshop. Sanders asked many questions related to Bikky's cultural identity and where he fit into Ainu art.

Sidebar 8 Bikky's Tools

Ainu men have been proud of producing a variety of carvings using only a small home-made knife called the *makiri*, and Bikky was no different. The *makiri* was used not only for carving utilitarian household objects such as bowls but also for the exquisitely carved ceremonial objects such as the all-important *ikupasuy* and *inaw* (see Sidebar 3). Ainu boys learned to master the *makiri* by watching their fathers, grandfathers, and other elders, and when one had mastered these skills, the community considered him to be an independent carver as well as a man. Ainu men always wore the *makiri* hanging from their belts encased in an intricately carved wooden sheath, the design engraved with great care. A man's carving skill was judged by the quality of both design and technique found on the sheath and hilt of the *makiri*.



Fig. 5.8.1: *Makiri*.

Continues on page 62

Bikky Tools *continued*

Ainu women also had their own *mokiri*, called the *menoko-mokiri* (woman's knife), used for cutting clothes, preparing food, or skinning hides. This knife was also culturally important—its sheath and hilt was carved elaborately by men, and when a young man was interested in a girl, he carved a *menoko-mokiri* and gave it to her. If she accepted it and wore it on her side, she accepted his love.¹

When Bikky was a child, he learned to carve in the traditional manner using the *makiri* from his father, who was greatly respected for his traditional carvings. Later, when Bikky sought new carving challenges, he used it almost exclusively to create the beautiful *Bikky mon'yo* in his jewelry. While commercial carving knives and small chisels would have given a cleaner, more precise cut, Bikky felt that work produced with commercial tools was too sterile.

As he grew professionally, he began to carve larger sculptures, and he had to teach himself to use a wide variety of hand tools such as chisels, hand axes, and other chopping and shaping tools. He also used power tools such as drills, pneumatic chisels, and chain saws to rough out a piece, but they were only a means to an end. Bikky loved to work aggressively with hand tools. There was something sensual about his swinging an axe to a rhythm, wood chips flying, his face shining with sweat, grunting with every swing of the axe. He often roughed out several works at once. Later, perhaps days later, he would use progressively smaller hand tools to the point he would often just caress the wood with the chisel creating a texture for a new life form. The process of creating a work brought physical pleasure to Bikky, and hand tools were his way of communicating directly with the feminine spirit of the wood. He began using an elbow adze, favorite tools of the Native artists, after his work with Bill Reid in British Columbia.

I visited his studio after his death and the experience was truly surreal. On the wall above a work bench, each in its own place, were more than one hundred carving tools such as *mokiri*, larger knives,

Although Bikky had begun to come to terms with his racial identity, he wasn't happy about the Ainu questions, nor was he happy about being classified as an Ainu artist. Sanders did not know that Bikky was deeply conflicted about his heritage and thought Bikky was withdrawn and uncommunicative. Bikky finally became friendlier after Sanders asked him knowledgeable questions about the design elements on his carvings. Bikky took them into his studio to show on the blackboard how the elements could be modified and combined. He further explained he had developed many of the current designs found in Ainu tourist's art, and Sanders realized that many of the distinctive Ainu designs he saw in the gift shops all over Hokkaido were indeed derived from Bikky's work.

Later that day, Bikky mentioned that he had received a cultural exchange scholarship from the government of Hokkaido, but he hadn't decided where he wanted to go.² Sanders encouraged him to visit British Columbia to experience the unique woodcarvings found there, because the native people of Canada's Northwest Coast had one of the strongest woodcarving traditions in the world. Sanders also insisted that Bikky meet the Native artists and discuss the problems and issues common to the First Nations people of Canada and the Ainu.³ Sanders told Bikky that he could introduce him to several Native artist friends of his, including Bill Reid, the famous Haida carver.

Bill Reid (1920–1998) is one of Canada's pre-eminent Native artists. Considered a national treasure, he is widely recognized as having contributed to the revival of Haida art traditions. Born in Victoria, British Columbia, to a father of Scottish/German origin and a mother of Haida descent, he is the great grand-

nephew of the famous Haida artist Charles Edenshaw (c.1839–1920) who was one of the greatest artists of the Northwest Coast. Recognized worldwide for his skill and artistry, Bill Reid's work is prized by museums, institutions, and private collectors throughout North America, Europe, and Japan. He received honorary degrees from several universities, the Lifetime National Aboriginal Achievement award, and three of his works were issued as Canadian national postage stamps. Perhaps the greatest tribute was the Canadian government issuing a new twenty-dollar bill in 2004 with his art featured on the back of the bill.

Traveling to Canada made sense to Bikky, who had long been drawn to the work of Native artists. In October, Bikky and his third wife Ryoko arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia. Bikky recalled standing on foreign soil for the first time in his life:

I chose Canada because the country is in the same latitude as Hokkaido and has a similar distribution of trees like Hokkaido. Moreover, I have been interested in totem poles for a long time, and I wanted to carve a totem pole, which was my simple motive for going to Canada⁴

Landing in Vancouver, Bikky was instantly impressed with the area's natural setting: the rugged coastal mountains to the north, the Georgia Straits and the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the farmland to the east. It was the middle of the autumn, and the trees were in full color.

Dr. Sanders took Bikky and his wife Ryoko to the home of Setsuko and Pierre Pieoche in Vancouver, where they stayed while looking for a permanent place to live. Setsuko, an artist, and Pierre, threw a party to introduce Bikky to the local artists community, including Bill Reid. The party had the desired affect; Bill Reid invited Bikky to work in the Reid studio on Granville Island, an artists colony and one of the major tourist centers in the city of Vancouver. In appreciation for Setsuko's kindness, Bikky carved an abstract likeness of Setsuko (Fig. 5.1), which

Bikky Tools *continued*

chisels, several adzes, hand saws, axes of different sizes, drill bits, and power tools. The studio, a converted school room from the late nineteenth century, had the smell of wood. The only light in the room came from the sun streaming in through a window. It was quiet, the same sense of quiet one feels sitting in a church. On the floor were several inches of saw dust, wood shavings and small chunks of wood that the Spirit of the Wood gave up as Bikky worked to release the image from its rough form. There were *inaw* on the walls, and a bear skull—*kimun-kamuy*, the god of the mountain—over the door. As I looked at the tools of his trade, I knew these were not "toys for boys," and I was not in a workshop. I was in *kamuy-mintar*, one of the Ainu "playground of the gods." I felt I was in the presence of the spirit of the master carver of the Ainu.

Sidebar Note

1. Kayano (1978:29).



Fig 5.1.A: figurative sculpture, "Setsuko doll," 1983. Wood: 85.0 x 16.0 x 17.5 cm. Owned by Setsuko & Pierre Picoche, Vancouver, B.C..

he titled "Setsuko doll." The one-meter tall figure is made in two sections: the top half is the head, a rounded portion with an inverted triangle flanked on each side with graceful S-shapes carved to represent her hair style at the time; the bottom half consists of a body and legs made of one piece with no body contouring, though two natural branches extending out from the body near the top, acting as arms. The two sections are carved so that the top half, which is supported by two short pegs coming out of a simple block of rounded wood, can sit on the bottom half at different angles. This develops tension as the top bends to the right or left, while the entire piece stands straight. As Bikky's only known abstract humanoid figure with a human model, it is a unique and important piece.

Sanders also took Bikky to the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology a day or two after he arrived. Bikky studied the museum's totem poles with great interest as Sanders pointed out the different tribal styles of totem poles and their symbolism.⁵

Totem Poles and a Potlatch

Before he began his work at Bill Reid's studio, Bikky traveled with his new friends to the Tsimshian Gitksan area on the Upper Skeena river in northern British Columbia, where totem poles erected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stand side by side with new ones. They first went to the village of 'Ksan, which means "River of Mists," where a traditional Gitksan village had been constructed in 1970 as a tourist attraction and artists' colony, including the Kitanmax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art ('Ksan), which provides training and education to young native artists on the values and artistic skills needed to develop Northwest Coast art.⁶

Bikky was particularly interested in the tools the Native artists used in the carving shed at 'Ksan, especially the wide variety of adzes: the D-adze, elbow adze, and straight adze, among others. Bikky, as is the Ainu tradition, used a chisel to form his work. He observed that the Northwest Coast carvers use their tools completely opposite to that of the Ainu, carving toward themselves and holding the knife with the blade coming from the little finger side of the hand, while the Ainu carve away from the body with the knife on the thumb side.⁷ He asked many questions of the carvers in the carving shed through a translator.

Throughout the area the skilled Native artists were respected. Museums and galleries exhibited their work as fine art, and there were many lavish books on Native art and artists available in the museum gift shops.⁸ The prices the galleries and gift shops charged for the art staggered Bikky. He saw that the Native artist and the non-Native art lover shared a pride for native art, in stark contrast to the disrespect that the Japanese public and artworld held for the native art of the Ainu.⁹ Bikky often lamented that there wasn't a single publication on contemporary Ainu artists in Japan.¹⁰

As impressed as Bikky was with the respect shown Native artists, it was seeing nineteenth-century totem poles, standing and fallen, that moved him the most and transformed his approach to his art. He was especially moved by the old totem poles that had fallen down and were decaying:

Most of the nineteenth-century totem poles and even those from the beginning of the twentieth century aren't standing. They've fallen to the ground and have begun to rot. Still, they were terrifically magical. It's clear the Native artists observed the struggle of nature. When I saw the totem poles, I had to throw away all my old ideas of what they were. I hadn't realized how serious they were. Seeing the real totem poles was so overwhelming that I felt nauseous. I hadn't grasped the meaning, the artistry, or the gigantic monumentality of the totem poles.¹¹

Over the decades moss had covered the fallen totem poles, and they had been scarred by wind, rain, sun, and snow. Some poles also had a rough and dry surface covered with hundreds of tiny worm holes but even decay couldn't eliminate the beauty of the carvings. To Bikky, they were powerful reminders of Native history, having stood through dramatic changes in the people's fortunes over time.



Fig. 5.2: "Hole-through-the-Sky" pole, late 19th c., Kitwancool, B.C..

One of the oldest totem poles, “Hole-through-the-Sky,” is still standing in Kitwancool, its village of origin (Fig. 5.2), and it was very interesting to Bikky. This pole, erected in the late nineteenth century, depicts a myth telling of a family’s origin in a wolf migration. A large hole at the bottom of the pole was used for ceremonial entrances, and the complicated design symbolizes the primordial age of the family myth. Multiple human beings and various animals are interconnected, a fine example of the juxtaposition of visual elements that is one of the most dynamic aspects of Northwest Coast art.¹²

The interconnection and interchangeability of human and animal forms resonated with the themes Bikky pursued in both “Animal” and “Tentacle (a maze).” He had wanted to show that all living things are connected even if their shapes are different. Bikky was especially impressed by the way the design elements wove in and out of each other.

And then there were the frogs. Sanders pointed out a frog design in an old totem pole and said with a smile, “your totem.” Bikky loved it and was fascinated by how the frog designs were incorporated in the totem poles, especially the way frogs came out of body parts of other animals or humans.¹³ For example, tears coming out of an eye might be shaped like a frog, and Bill Reid’s thirteen meter (forty-three feet) totem pole at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, features a frog coming out of a bear’s mouth, which delighted Bikky. He said, “Obviously how to incorporate frogs into the elements appears to be something extraordinary, but it’s also just simply great sculpture. Frogs suddenly appear coming out of finger nails or out from the eyes, and in the mouths (of humans or creatures), just incredible!”¹⁴ Bikky was deeply embarrassed that he had called his columnar art totem poles. Now that he really knew what a totem pole was, had touched them and spoken with them, and they with him, he never used the word “totem” to describe his work again and tried to correct others when they did.

When Bikky returned to Vancouver, Bill Reid invited him to a potlatch in Skidegate in the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii), home of the Haida First Nations people. Skidegate, “Place of Stones,” located on the southern tip of Graham Island, used to be known for its massive standing totem poles and cedar plank houses. In 1978 Bill Reid had carved and erected the first totem pole to go up in Skidegate in more than ninety years and was welcomed into the community. A potlatch¹⁵ was held for the hereditary chieftainship of the wolf clan of Tanu. More than two hundred people were invited to witness the event, and it



Fig. 5.3: *Indian Dance A*, 1983.

so much that he created a painting, *Indian Dance A* (Fig. 5.3), in honor of the ceremony.

At first glance *Indian Dance A* seems subtle and subdued. The colors are soft with highlights of red, black, blue, and white in varying densities ranging from saturated black to a cool blue battleship gray. Done in crayon and watercolors, there is activity to the four edges of the paper, coming from color, density, and thin scratch lines that have a feeling of spontaneity to them. There is, however, a feeling of confusion perhaps reflecting how Bikky felt as an outsider during the potlatch. Painted in Canada and hung in the “Images of British Columbia” exhibition at the Vancouver Artist Gallery, it incorporated elements from Chilkat blankets and the Northwest Coast Indian masks.¹⁷

was held in the community hall. Bikky, as an Ainu, was an unusual guest, but the indigenous man from Japan was well received by the Haida people at the potlatch, who treated him almost like a kin brother. He felt honored when he was introduced during the potlatch and wished that he knew enough English to communicate with the people around him.¹⁶

The hosting group displayed their hereditary possessions, sang their songs, and gave speeches. Dancers swayed with their button or Chilkat blankets flowing gracefully about them. The tremendous power of the masks reminded the guests of the history of the hosting group. While not understanding the potlatch, it was marvelous drama for Bikky. He enjoyed the music and dance

Bill Reid's Studio

Bikky began working in Bill Reid's studio on Granville Island as soon as he returned to Vancouver. Granville Island is a working artists' community, vibrant with life, energy, and creativity. There are many facilities for active artists such as studios, art schools, galleries, theaters, and so on. It is also an important tourist attraction for the city. Bikky loved being a part of the scene.

Because of his visit to the 'Ksan school where he saw so many students carving with the adze, Bikky wanted Bill Reid to show him how to use it. A Vancouver newspaper reported, "He has been accustomed to using a large chisel and mallet to hew out his creations but was intrigued to see Indians swinging razor sharp, short-handled adzes that left a distinctive finish on cedar carvings."¹⁸ In a 1983 photograph (Fig. 5.4) Bill Reid shows Bikky how to use the contemporary type of elbow adze with a steel blade.¹⁹ Bikky practiced it and soon became proficient with the new tool. He liked it so well that he eventually made one for himself in Vancouver.²⁰

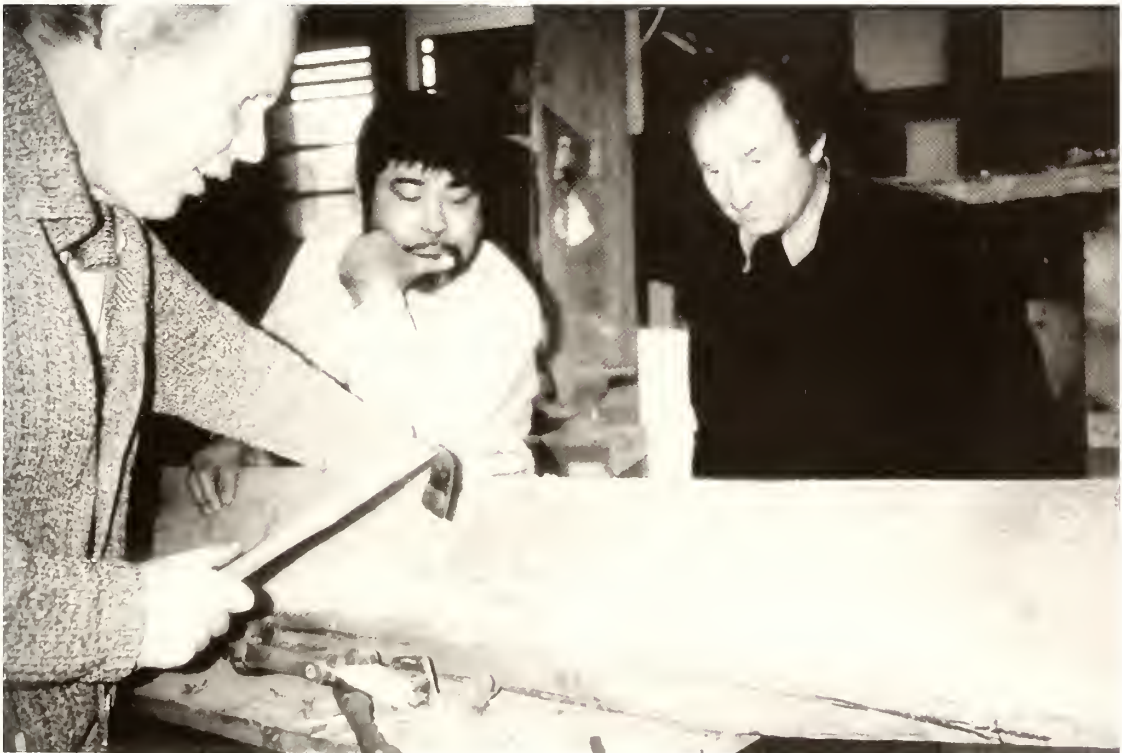


Fig. 5.4: Photo of Bill Reid and Bikky using an elbow adze. To the right is Pierre Pieoche of Vancouver.

Bikky spent almost all of his time in the studio for the next two months. Even though he couldn't speak English very well, the studio became a gathering place for many people due in part to his open and friendly personality. He enjoyed the Canadians' willingness to express their opinions about his work and their willingness to be open to his abstract works.²¹

Images of British Columbia Exhibition

"Bikky looked like a bear, drank like a fish, and worked like a beaver," said Bill Reid.²²

In spite of Bikky's social life and his continued drinking, he produced an amazingly large number of sculptures, paintings, and sketches during his stay in Vancouver, many of which appeared in the exhibition "Images of British Columbia." Bikky had sketched totem poles, trees, patterns, and scenery during his travels around British Columbia; when he returned to Vancouver, he would select his favorites and add color to them. He loved to create spontaneous drawings, sometimes dabbing his fingers in paint or ink.

Among the paintings exhibited was an untitled abstract painting (Fig. 5.5) that evolved from a sketch Bikky made in the Queen Charlotte Islands. It is influenced by the characteristic formline design elements of the Northwest Coast art. Ovoids with eye lid lines are scattered throughout the painting along with



Fig. 5.5: Untitled painting, 1983.

split-U forms and crescent shapes. He has used the characteristic colors of the Northwest Coast palette: black, red, and white.

In the sculptures he created while in Vancouver, Bikky abstracted the sculptural forms of Northwest Coast art. For instance, a simple undecorated bowl represents a mountain sheep horn bowl with its elegant and gracefully outswept shape (Fig. 5.6). However, Bikky carved it in a vertical position to show its purely sculptural form (Fig. 5.7).



Fig. 5.6: Mountain sheep horn bowl.

Another example is the rendering of the awesome Kwakwaka'wakw mask of Dzoonokwa, the mythical giant wild woman (Fig. 5.8); Bikky took the essence of the image and interpreted it in his own abstract form, which focuses solely on the lips, emphasizing the sensual relationship to his subject and reminiscent of his *Ki-men* masks (Fig. 5.9).



Fig. 5.8: Kwakwaka'wakw mask of Dzoonokwa.



Fig. 5.7: Bikky's bowl, (*Images of British Columbia*), 1983.



Fig. 5.9: Bikky's abstract mask (*Images of British Columbia*), 1983.

The largest of his Northwest Coast sculptures, and one of the few Bikky named, is titled *The Watchman* (Fig. 5.10). He derived the title from Bill Reid's *The Three Watchmen* (Fig. 5.11), which had so impressed Bikky. Reid's work illustrates a well-known Haida legend about three brother chiefs who fall in love with

a trickster, Raven. Raven fools them and turns them into beautiful women. Unfortunately the remainder of the legend is lost and we don't know the rest of the story.²³ These three brothers are usually placed in the top of the totem poles to guard villages, and Bill Reid had created poles that incorporated these images as well as a frog coming out of a bear's mouth. Bikky's *Watchman* may very well be a tribute to Bill Reid, even though there is no similarity in style. The oval shape at the top faces the viewer and looping "arms" seem to suggest the "welcome figure" in Northwest Coast art. There is a slender torso in the middle, followed by two legs with two large projections at the top of both legs. The two projections appear to be some sort of mask, one of which resembles a bear.



Fig. 5.10: "The Watchman" (from *Images of British Columbia*), 1983. Yellow cedar; 210.0 x 52.5 x 52.0 cm..



Fig. 5.11: A modern frontal house pole by Bill Reid, assisted by Douglas Cranmer, at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (UBC 50030).

Returning to Ainu Country

After finishing his successful exhibition in January 1984, it was the time for Bikky to go back to Ainu country. He wrote about his impressions:

*At my first meeting with Haida artist Bill Reid, my stereotype of Indians was shattered. Here was a Native person who was successful and respected, someone with pride.... And I shall never forget the depth of the grandeur of the wildness (in Canada). Although our Hokkaido has a rich and magnificent nature, the nature of Canada is too vast to understand.*²⁴

Bikky truly loved the natural world of Canada, and he was eager to return to Canada as soon as he could. He also greatly admired the indigenous art of the Northwest Coast and was pleased to have been immersed in it. Most of all, he gained unparalleled insight into what it meant to be a native artist. He was inspired by the respect shown artists like Bill Reid, and he hoped one day to create an Ainu “art laboratory” like the communities in Granville Island and ‘Ksan and perpetuate his dream that he and the Ainu could have self-respect, be respected by the people and the government of Japan, and by art communities around the world.

End Notes

1. *Bankaba Shinpo* (November 18, 1983).
2. The Hokkaido prefectural government provides a special scholarship for five selected local artists for the purpose of a cultural exchange undertaking every year. These five artists can choose any country that they want to go to (*Bankaba Shinpo*, November 18, 1983). The purpose of the scholarship is to give them a chance to have an artistic cultural experience.
3. *Asabi Shinbun* (October 7, 1983).
4. *Bankaba Shinpo* (November 18, 1983).
5. "Most of the older sculptures displayed at the UBC Museum of Anthropology were acquired through purchase in the 1950s by the Totem Pole Preservation Committee, established by the UBC. Museum of Anthropology and the British Columbia Provincial Museum." (Halpin, 1983:48).
6. Although the school is located in the Tsimshian region, the school has taught a broad range of artistic styles found throughout the Northwest Coast. While the original instructors included non-native artists Bill Holm and Duane Pasco, and native artists such as Chief Tony Hunt (Kwakiutl) and Robert Davidson (Haida), later instructors were almost exclusively native artists. The school has trained many talented artists such as Frieda Diesing (Haida) and Dempsey Bob (Tahltan-Tlingit).
7. Japanese wood carvers also carve away from the body.
8. Native American artistic creativity went through various stages of descriptive terminology, from being a simple trade item, to "scientific specimens," "ethnographic artifacts," "craft," "primitive art," "curio," to a gradual recognition of art as "fine art" in Canada and the United States in the twentieth century. There are several reasons for these shifts, but one of the most important was the transformation of the incorporation of Native art as part of a self-serving national artistic identity to including Native heritage into the respective nation state. Canada has, through its museum curators and scholars, developed a growing national appreciation for the values and status of objects of Native creativity, elevating the perception of Native creativity from "craft/artifact" to "fine art" since the 1960s. For example, the 1967 exhibition, *Arts of Raven: Masterworks by the Northwest Coast Indian* at the Vancouver Art Gallery was truly the first exhibition to bring about a perception shift of First Nations objects as "art" or "fine art" in Canada. The validation legitimized the new description in the institutions of the art world, including artists, critics, the interested public, and at the government level, so important at the time, greatly facilitated the change in the perception and evaluation of objects.
9. Yamakawa (1988:208–9).
10. Since Bikky's death several books on contemporary Ainu art have been published. Most are photographic introductions of an individual artist's work often with brief comments from the artist or friends, with no critical analysis of their work. Some books were published by the artists themselves. These include Ohtsuka (1993), Chiri and Yokoyama (1995), Toko (1995), and Ogawa and Kato (1996). And, since his death, several volumes have been published on Bikky's work, including Hariu et al. (1989), Sunazawa R (1990), Asakawa (1996), Shibahashi (2001) Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo (2001).
11. *Bankaba Shinpo* (November 18, 1983).
12. Bancroft-Hunt and Forman (1979:38–9). Bikky was very interested in not only the artistry of this pole, but of the mythology as well. Bikky learned a love of traditional stories through his mother, who was well known as a teller of *yukar*, Ainu oral epic stories. Bikky would have heard hundreds during his life time and incorporated elements from the myths in his work.
13. Photographs taken by Bikky during the Canadian experience show many more pictures of frog segments on totem poles than of any other figure.
14. Yamakawa (1988:197).
15. The Northwest Coast *potlatch* was "the occasion at which a traditional name, rank or hereditary privilege was claimed through dances, speeches and the distribution of property to those invited. The group hosting a potlatch displayed their hereditary possessions, which included songs, dances and masks, they recited the origins of these rights and the history of their transmission, and bestowed the new rank and name

upon the member now entitled to use them. The ceremony was completed by distributing gifts to the guests. The guest groups, by witnessing the claims made, validated and sanctioned the status displayed and claimed" (Cole and Chaikin 1990:5).

16. Interview with Ryoko Sunazawa (April 6, 1994).
17. Interview with Ryoko Sunazawa (September 17, 1993).
18. *The Province Newspaper* (January 2, 1984).
19. By 1983, Bill Reid had been suffering from Parkinson's disease for approximately eight years. He continued to create wonderful art with the aid of his assistants.
20. During my visit to his studio in Otoiennpu, I counted three adzes, and I saw a video tape of Bikky using one.
21. Bikky tried very hard to learn as much English as possible. With his outgoing personality and his willingness to try new English words, he was able to communicate surprisingly well. (Yamakawa 1988: 199).
22. Interview (December 19, 1993). Reid went on to say that while Bikky always seemed to be drinking, he never saw Bikky drunk during the day. Pierre Pieoche, Bill Reid's friend, states that in a conversation with Bikky about his drinking, Bikky said that "carving was too dangerous to attempt while drunk, but it was safe to be drunk while painting," and he often was (interview February 6, 1994).
23. This legend was recounted in a 1986 videotape entitled, "The Three Watchmen" by Bill Roxborough, and Michael Brodie. The production describes the work of Haida artist Robert Davidson as he creates three totem poles. Commissioned in 1983, the poles were erected on August 8, 1984, in the atrium of the Maclean Hunter Building in downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
24. Bikky later stated in another newspaper interview that "perfect nature exists in Canada" (*Asahi Shinbun*, Aug. 28, 1988).



Frontispiece: Bicky working at his studio in Otoineppu, Hokkaido.

Chapter 6

The Northern King: Final Years (1984-1989)

One day the Northern Queen asked the Northern King, "why are you so proud?" He replied, "well, look at the maps. Old ones. New ones. The North is always located at the top of the map, isn't it? The North is always on top." The King looked at the Queen quietly and smiled.¹

Bikky returned to Ootineppu from Canada on January 10, 1984, and went immediately to work in his studio. The visit had transformed every aspect of his art, and the final five years of his life were to be intensely productive and creative. Not only had he been inspired by the artistic freedom and self-respect he found in the Native artists in Canada, but he was stimulated by watching artists work who were proud of their heritage and their art and who actively studied it. He was especially impressed by Bill Reid's stature in the mainstream art community and his recognition as an important Native and contemporary artist.

Before his visit to Vancouver, Bikky had been ambivalent about his Ainu heritage and his identification as an Ainu artist, but his experience in Canada helped him realize that he could be a modern sculptor as well as an Ainu artist. He also became more comfortable with public expressions of his native heritage. He began to think about the future of Ainu art in general and more consciously planned the direction of his own art.

Bikky's three months in British Columbia had also given him a new perspective on the natural environment in Hokkaido and his relationship to it as an artist. He told the *Asahi Shimbun* in spring, 1983, that he felt he was beginning to understand that his artistic style expressed a bond with nature,² and his first exhibition after his return, in March, was called *Sunazawa Bikky Exhibition-Furiko*

(A Pendulum), because, he said, his mind kept going back and forth between the natural worlds of Canada and Hokkaido like “a pendulum.” His interaction with the natural world had always been important to him, but it was not until he went to Canada that he began to think consciously about his role *in* nature, not an interaction with, but being a part of nature.

Visiting Canada had re-awakened Bikky’s “northern consciousness,” and this became one of his major themes after his return. To Bikky, this consciousness celebrated the rigor and grandeur of northern lands: the harsh weather, icy mountains, tall forests, deep snows, and long winter nights. He also recognized with a new clarity the importance of northern peoples’ adaptability to these extremes and their strong links with their ancestors and traditions. Bikky observed that the Canadian First Nations peoples’ pride in their culture, which had survived despite great upheaval, was similar to that of the Ainu, including their genius for creativity that helped sustain their culture. Bikky responded to this pride, believing that it was something shared by all northern indigenous people. Influenced by Canadian Native’s use of their own culture in their work, Bikky’s sculpture became more specifically Ainu in its themes.

Because of his visit, Bikky began to think of himself as a “Northern King” who challenged nature not by controlling it with self-serving authority or power but collaborating with it through his endless creativity and with his strong pride in being an Ainu and an artist. He, as an artist and a king, could *reconstruct* and *revive* the trees that were cut down and give them a new life and order in his kingdom of the north. In turn, nature would *complete* his artworks. Bikky once told a friend, “These wooden sculptures will grow after leaving my hands.”³ Bikky, fascinated by the weathering of the many old totem poles he saw in Canada, believed the actual decomposition was perhaps that most powerful stage in the life of a wooden sculpture. Not only did he understand that the breakdown of tissue was the natural order of things, but more importantly he saw that this process was in keeping with the Ainu spiritual practice that required gifts of the gods to be returned to Gods’ Land. In his artwork of the next five years, this conscious sense of channeling nature back to the gods wove its way through all of his work.

Columns, Not Totem Poles

Increasingly recognized as one of Hokkaido's leading artists, Bikky received numerous invitations to participate in museum and gallery exhibitions in Sapporo and other northern cities and in the rest of Japan. He also received a number of important local commissions that allowed him to explore some of the themes that had emerged after visiting Canada.

In 1985 Bikky created three large site-specific columnar pieces. He carved the first, an unnamed work called a "totem pole" locally, for Kamisunagawa-cho, in the western part of Hokkaido near where Bikky's father Koa-kanno had been born. This simple pole stands at one end of a new bridge, called *Yacho no Hashi* (the Wild Birds' Bridge) for the recordings of local birds' twittering that play when people walk across the bridge. Bikky's seven-meter high pole is topped with a



Fig. 6.1: *Me (Buds)*, 1985.



Fig. 6.2: A house post in situ, Cowichan, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, 19th c..

woodpecker with a long extended beak, below which are three eggs in a nest. This was the first columnar artwork Bikky created after coming back from Canada, and was the last one to be called a totem pole—his confrontation with the “real” totem poles of Canada was so intense that he felt ashamed of his ignorance of totem poles and refused to call them such. This, however, was the name it took on in Kamisunagawa-cho.

The other columnar work is a two-piece set of abstract sculptures entitled *Me* (Buds; Fig. 6.1), referring to the intellectual growth of the students, placed in the middle of the courtyard at the Asahikawa Professional High School to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the school. The two abstract figures, carved from Japanese oak, face the same direction. The three-meter (ten feet) high figure, the taller of the two, is completely abstract, with an elongated rectangular torso with a long neck and a small conical shaped “head.” It resembles a whaler’s hat similar to those worn by the Makah and Nuuchahnulth people, which Bikky saw many examples of while in Canada. These figures are somewhat reminiscent of “welcome figures” or “house posts” of the Northwest Coast (Fig. 6.2); the smaller figure particularly resembles the old house post from the Halkomelem area of the Coast Salish now displayed in the entrance showcase of the British Columbia Provincial Museum in Victoria, which Bikky enjoyed visiting. While it’s impossible to know for sure if this house post directly inspired Bikky to carve these figures, the formal elements of both works are prominent.

As a realization of Bikky’s collaboration with nature, in the years since these sculptures were erected, cracks have appeared from the exposure to the rigorous Hokkaido environment. Both the *Bird Bridge* column and *Buds* now have a mysterious and organic presence of their own, much like the aging totem poles Bikky saw in the old Gitksan territorial areas of the Upper Skeena River in British Columbia.

The Wind

In 1986 Bikky's relationship with nature began to be focused on the theme of "wind," perhaps symbolizing his psychological state following his return from Canada—but also connecting to the important role that the wind played in Ainu culture. He seemed to be released from the restricted intellectual framework he had created for himself in the past such as his cultural identity and his artistic goals. Like the wind blowing through nature, he longed for freedom as an artist, an Ainu, and as a person. This can be seen in a poem Bikky wrote about the wind shortly before his death. It is his most famous poem:

*Wind,
You are a four-headed and four-legged monster.
As you are so furious, people love your intermediate moments, which
are called the four seasons.
I pray, blow the strongest wind upon me and my entire body.
Especially, blow it upon my eyes.*

*Wind,
As you are four-headed and four-legged monster,
I'd like to present you a nice pair of
four-legged pants.
And please, hold me once.⁴*

The four-headed and four-legged monster symbolized the mystical and mysterious nature of the seasons, which Bikky always loved. He asked the wind to blow into his eyes so that he could see into himself.⁵ This metaphorical expression also paralleled the expressions of the Ainu oral epics, the *yukar*. A destructive wind appears in the old stories as a bad god who caused people to suffer but was calmed by a good god after a dramatic battle.

Bikky's poem also alludes to an Ainu ceremony that seeks to reverse unusually bad weather. The Yakumo Ainu, for example, performed a wind ritual when the east wind blew fiercely in the autumn and salmon would not come up the rivers. Four young Ainu men were chosen to play the roles of the gods; three men played the good gods of west, north, and south, and one played the bad god of the east. The good gods wore elaborate ceremonial outfits; in contrast, the bad east

god had to wear an old and worn-out outfit. At the beginning of the performance, the bad god splashes the audience with water and throws sand on them, but the three good gods chase the east god into the sea. He tries to escape, but the good gods catch him, bring him in front of the audience, and make him apologize to the audience for his bad behavior.⁶

The first of Bikky's wind-themed works was *Yottsu no Kaze* (Four Winds; Fig. 6.3). He received the commission to do a large sculpture for the opening of the Outdoor Museum of Contemporary Art in Sapporo in July 1986. His first drawing was done in December 1985 and on it he scribbled "this drawing is the first idea for *Four Winds* (for the outdoor museum), and so is a memorable one."⁷ While Bikky often made many drawings for a new theme, he seemed to have a definite idea for this project for little changed between his first drawing and his final work.

In January 1986, four four-hundred-year-old Glehn's spruce trees were brought to Bikky's studio from the northernmost part of Hokkaido University's experimental forest. Before Bikky set about his work, he sat down on the snowy



Fig. 6.3: *Yottsu no Kaze* (Four Winds), 1986.



Fig. 6.4: Bikky performing the *kamuy-nomi*.

ground and performed a *kamuy-nomi* for the trees, using an *ikupasuy* (a prayer-stick) and a ceremonial sake cup and saucer. Although he generally performed such rituals privately when he began new work, this ceremony was photographed by Katsuaki Kitayama of the *Hokkaido Shimbun* (Fig. 6.4), one of the first times Bikky had publicly acknowledged the connection between his modern work and his Ainu heritage.⁸ It seemed to prove his psychological change and his acceptance of his public Ainu identity.

More so than his totem poles and columns, *Four Winds* was Bikky's most ambitious outdoor wooden artwork. As he began the work for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sapporo he wrote:

Although this is an outdoor museum, I'm trying my luck with wooden sculptures. Outdoor sculptures are always done in bronze and stone, but I'm going to submit wooden sculptures.... Natural phenomena, the snow and wind, will add to their completeness.... I calculate that it will stand there at least fifty years.⁹

In carving the four Glehn's spruce trees for this work, Bikky kept the original shape of the log, carving out the central portion, each of which faces one of the four compass directions. He covered the surface of each column with thousands of rhythmical scale-like chisel marks, and it's almost as if each scale-like mark represents a new grain for the trees or each breath he took as he carved with his chisel.¹⁰ The wood has the textured quality of living things or cells. When he was working on *Four Winds*, Bikky left the following in his private notebook:

I make use of the trees in nature, grown without touching human hands, as materials.

Thus, they are living things. It's quite natural that living things will atrophy and decay.

I (as an artist) will reconstruct them anew—giving them a new life with a new form.¹¹

For a 1986 exhibition at the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, Bikky submitted an indoor work called *Kaze ni Kiku* (Listening to the Wind; Fig. 6.5).¹² There are four abstract cylindrical forms that Bikky carved inside and out. Each has a small rectangular head-like project and each has the presence of a human figure although they are all very abstract. Bikky carved the cylindrical forms

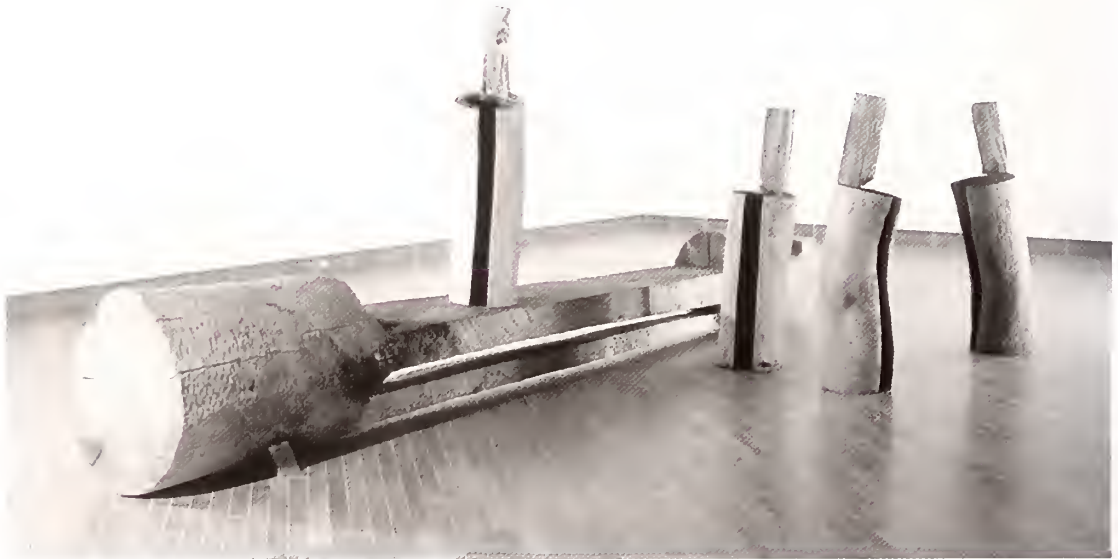


Fig. 6.5: *Kaze ni Kiku* (Listening to the Wind), 1986.

according to the contour of the tree, so that they appear to bend, stoop, or tilt. He specified that they could be arranged in any composition; for example, they can be arranged to depict Ainu wind mythologies, or as if they are talking to each other in a group, or so that one figure is being left out of the conversation. In other compositions the cylindrical forms appear to be in a stage setting of some sort, or just stand there, listening to the wind. At the end of 1986 this work was actually used as a stage installation for a modern dance performance entitled *The Coexistence of Nature and Humans*.¹³ Clearly this piece can be described as an installation piece. However, because of the rarity of this type of work in Japan at the time, it is highly unlikely that Bikky was influenced by the installation work of other artists. This is a wonderful example of his unique creativity, blending Ainu spirituality with the primal forces of nature.

Three years later, in 1989—invited to submit work to an exhibition of contemporary sculptures at the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery outside Tokyo—Bikky revisited the “wind” theme with two massive and dynamic works both named *Kaze* (Wind).¹⁴ One piece seems to suggest the open mouth of a killer



Fig 6.6: *Kaze* (Wind), 1988.

whale, the god of the ocean, rising from the water (Fig 6.6).¹⁵ By carving away wood midway on the right side, a mouth is formed using the natural contour of the wood. Examining the piece reveals several U-shape metal joints holding together some of the pieces of wood, but the overall impression is organic. In this sense it resembles his 1980 work *Tongue of God*. Bikky often stated that to “reconstruct” natural wood was to give it a new life and personality; in other words, that Bikky, as a part of nature, gave a new dimension of life to his works.

Unlike *Tongue of God*, which is meticulously finished, Bikky’s chisel marks on one of the two *Kaze* works are much rougher and use several carving techniques. For instance, he gouged many deep, rough, and sharp incision marks in the upper portion of the piece, carved against the grain of the wood, creating an almost visceral texture. Before going to Canada and being exposed to the distinctive linear patterns of the adze marks on totem poles, Bikky’s chisel marks were random and unintentional, the end result of shaping wood with a tool. After his return to Otoiappu, however, Bikky was acutely aware of his carving technique. He found that by controlling the way he removed wood with the chisel, he could create different moods and attitudes such as found in these two *Wind* pieces.

The second work named *Wind* (Fig. 6.7) suggests the dramatic life and



Fig. 6.7: *Wind*, 1988.

death struggles found in nature. Made from two lumps of Japanese oak, it has the same primordial quality as the first work, but the tension is almost tangible. Most of the surface is incised with thousands of chisel marks but offset by several smooth areas made by a saw. Bikky not only intentionally exposed some portions of the natural grain of the wood through judicious use of newly cut areas, but also left older cut areas, darkened and weathered through the years, as contrast. The cracks, gaps, knots, and stains of the grain of the wood also become an integral part of the piece.

For the Kanagawa exhibition Bikky also created a marvelously simple and abstract sculpture entitled *Kaze no Oh to Oh-bi* (King and Queen of Wind; Fig. 6.8).¹⁶ The 1.73-meter-tall column (more than five and one-half feet), separated to form two heads, has an integrated base that also serves as a single neck and shoulders for the royal couple. The slight flair at the top of both the King and Queen add a positive space to the harmoniously balanced composition. It is carved smoothly on the outside surfaces and on the concave areas where the heads join. Again, we see rough and smooth surfaces used to create an effect—this time calm and regal.



Fig. 6.8: *Kaze no Oh to Oh-bi* (King and Queen of Wind), 1988.

The North

Another theme that Bikky developed over the final years of his life were works that reflected his “northern” consciousness, although it was an idea that wove its way through most of his work throughout his life. It took explicit form in a number of pieces, including his 1987 *Kita no Oh to Oh-bi* (Northern King and Queen; Fig. 6.9).¹⁷

The Northern King and Queen are a pair of upright sculptures, each

consisting of three stacked spheres with a base at the bottom, a major form that he had used since the *Tob* series of 1979, just after he moved to Otoineppu. The two sculptures provide a strong symbolic contrast between the attributes of female and male, which though abstract is also biomorphic and even humanoid. The work symbolizes the abstract sexuality between men and women that Bikky pursued in his “Tentacle” theme.

His continuing theme of “northernness” led to the abstract and strikingly simplified sculpture entitled *Kita no Dobutsu* (Northern Animals) in 1987 (Fig. 6.10). The two abstract organic shapes are elevated on short, square pedestals attached and placed side by side on a long rectangular board. These organic C-shaped pieces are somewhat similar to the *Northern King and Queen* but are placed so that they create a twisted and tightly controlled, complex spatial movement



Fig 6.9: *Kita no Oh to Oh-bi* (Northern King and Queen), 1987.

in contrast to the somewhat serene, relaxed feeling of the “Northern King and Queen.”

Bikky used Japanese oak, which gives a whiteness to the pieces that is reminiscent of a newborn smooth-skinned animal looking out at the world for the first time. In contrast, the base of the rectangular board has the finely carved chisel-marks that is found on much of his work since moving to Otoineppu. This creates a subtle but definite contrast between the animals, and it emphasizes the smoothness of the organic shapes. This piece symbolizes the drama of life young animals face in the northern kingdom that Bikky loved so much.

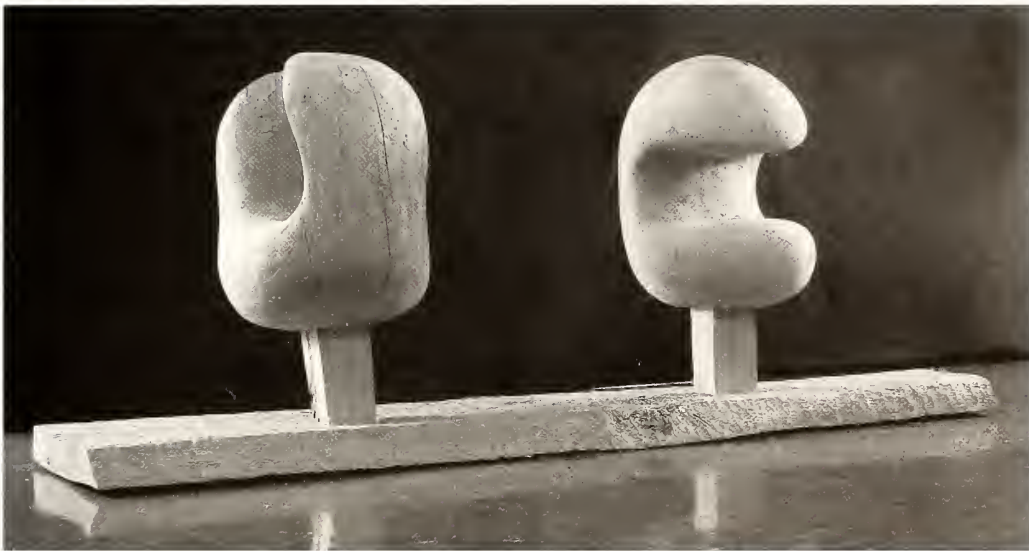


Fig. 6.10: *Kita no Dobutsu* (Northern Animals), 1987.

Personal Themes

Although much of the work that Bikky would create during the last years of his life reflected his experience in Canada, he also continued to pursue ideas that had occupied him closely throughout his career. One work, *Bunsui-rei A.B* (Watershed A.B, Fig. 6.11), returns to Bikky’s love of puns and ambiguous word meanings.¹⁸ At first viewing, these two wooden figures appear to be deer-like animals. The right-angled, streamlined shapes are carved from one piece of wood with the legs attached separately. The divided front legs seem to be symbolic of moun-



Fig. 6.11: *Bunsui-rei A.B* (Watershed A.B), 1985.

tains and valleys that make up a hydrological watershed, but the connection between the forms of the pieces and the title is problematic, perhaps a metaphoric expression of nature and natural phenomena commonly found in the *yukar*, the Ainu oral epics. Also deceptive is the work's apparent connection to Shinto religious art. Deer mandalas are often prominent in the art depicting the Kasuga cult.¹⁹ However, Makoto Kawakami, Bikky's close friend in Otoineppu, disclosed that Bikky said that *Watershed A.B* are female and male genitalia, ingeniously disguised by title and the carved composition.²⁰ Armed with this knowledge, it's easy to identify the erect penis and the labia of the female genitalia—Bikky's most overtly sexual work, despite the disguise.

At the beginning of 1987 Bikky started a new series entitled *Gozen Sanji no Gangu* (Toys at 3:00 A.M.; Fig. 6.12). As the title suggests, the series was created early in the morning, close to daybreak, when Bikky did most of his work. He described his work routine:

*I try to devote myself from 11 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. to shaping my ideas for my work. I always stop sketching at 3:30 a.m. and begin carving. Because that is the time when the express train Rishiri passed near my studio, the sound of the train became a signal for me to begin carving. I have worked by this routine for ten years.*²¹



Fig. 6.12: *Gozen Sanji no Gangu* (Toys at 3:00 A.M.).

Although Bikky loved socializing with people, he wanted to have complete privacy for his artistic activity and chose the late night when nobody would disturb him so that he could, as he described it, “confront himself.” His studio, open to the weather on one side, had only one small heater and in the winter the temperature in the studio was often well below zero degrees Fahrenheit—and he often lost feeling in his hands. Pieces of ice and frozen wood chips would seem to explode every time he drove the axe into the wood.

Just as Bikky’s father had confronted the severe winter nights in snow caves with only the clothes he was wearing when he was out hunting, so too would Bikky challenge his art and himself against the snow and cold. Bikky’s artistic

activity seemed to be at its best with self-imposed adversity. He would get himself cornered in order to challenge himself physically and psychologically.

The many works in his new “Toys at 3:00 A.M.” series were done in small scale, approximately thirty centimeters (eleven or twelve inches). As the title of “toys” suggests, and like his early “Tentacle” series, the works were small enough that people could pick them up and play with them. From the dates of some of his toy drawings, we know that the idea for this series was already formed by the winter of 1986. Although most of Bikky’s work had become dramatically larger after his exposure to the totem poles and house posts of the Indians of Canada’s Northwest Coast, he had enjoyed working on smaller pieces since creating the *Bikky mon’yo* finger ring patterns in his youth.

“Toys at 3:00 A.M.” celebrated the primordial spirit-world creatures that shared the nights with Bikky. We know that Bikky believed he was releasing and/or making new life forms from the *kamuy* (gods) of the wood. His observations of the animals carved in the totem poles of the indigenous people of the Northwest Coast gave him the insights and the knowledge to know that he must look deeper within himself to create wonderful new animals. These included an abstract scorpion-like insect with multiple wings and a long articulated tail and others that look like butterflies with four wings. All the insect-like creations have articulated segments such as long, slender, flexible feelers, tails, and antennae, which are connected with hinged wooden joints so that they can move freely.

This kind of detailed and delicate workmanship is technically similar to a variety of creatures such as fish and other sea world animals he created when he was working at the Kitanihon Folkcraft Company in Sapporo in 1960s and 1970s. These mysterious insect-like creatures appeared in his bizarre book *Aoi Sakyu nite* (In the Blue Sand Dune) published in 1976, a collection of prose and poems inspired by his dreams from 1964 to 1973. In the book various kinds of very peculiar and surrealistic creatures appear, such as “a moth with three wings like the propeller of a fishing boat.” “Toys at 3:00 A.M.” appear to be the materialized images of the surrealistic creatures found in his dreams and “reconstructed” life forms from the land of the *kamuy*. While most of his large works were done leaving rough or small rhythmical chisel marks on the surface, the “Toys at 3:00 A.M.” were finished with a polished, smooth surface that illustrates the mysterious shininess that almost all new life exhibits.



Fig. 6.13: Bill Reid's transformation pendant with detachable "mask," 1982.

When he held the "Toys at 3:00 A.M." exhibition in the Aoki gallery in Tokyo, Martine Reid, Bill Reid's wife, came from Canada to see his show. Martine was surprised at the small scale of Bikky's work, because she was only familiar with the larger he had created in Canada. She said that Bikky's "Toys at 3:00 A.M." reminded her of a pendant of a dogfish transforming into a woman carved by Bill Reid (Fig. 6.13) when Bikky was in Canada. Based on her suggestion, it's possible to conjecture that Bikky had been inspired by the mystic transformation quality of the pendant and the many transformation masks of the Northwest Coast when he created "Toys at 3:00 A.M."²²

Painting, Sketches, Woodblock Prints, Calligraphy

Even as he created some of his most impressive monumental sculpture, Bikky continued to paint and pursue work in other media. In 1987 he held two exhibitions, both called “Sculpture-Painting,” made up solely of his paintings, one at the Park Hotel in Sapporo and the other at a gallery in Yokohama. He had begun his career as a painter and constantly sketched, even when talking or drinking with his friends, and created thousands of drawings and paintings during his lifetime. However, after he switched the main focus of his media from two-dimensional paintings to three-dimensional sculptures in the 1960s, many of his sketches

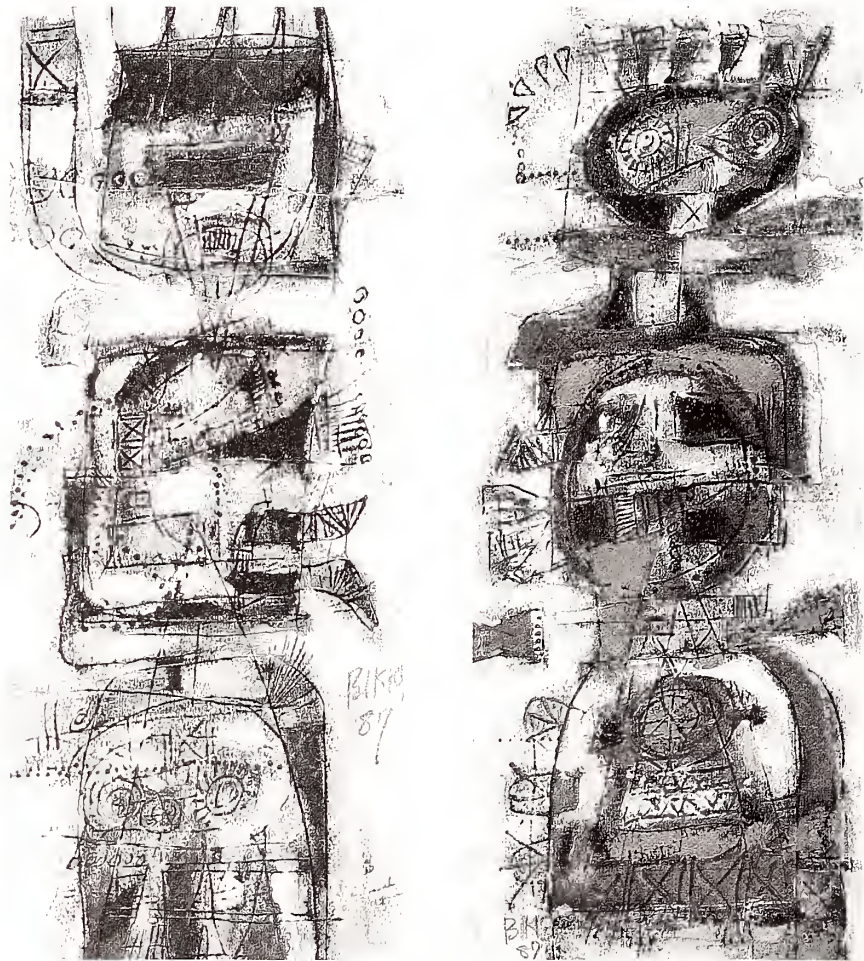


Fig. 6.14: *Kita no Oh to Oh-bi* (Northern King and Queen), 1987.



Fig. 6.15: *Do No.1* (Move No.1), 1987.

captured or solved the spatial relationships that he would transfer to his sculptures. He told an interviewer:

*I always make sketches. I make a couple hundred of sketches in order to get the exact image of what I want from the sculpture. I think making sketches is definitely needed in order to acquire the “lines” of my thoughts, to assure myself in my work.*²³

Biky often experimented with techniques, such as using his fingers to put the pigments directly on paper—a method he called “sculpture-painting.” Sometimes he coated the picture plane with different pigments and scratched it with a wooden stick or a fork to get the image he was looking for. Using various kinds of lines and materials heightened his energy on the canvas.

He created two abstract paintings using crayons and watercolors on paper named *Kita no Oh to Oh-bi* (Northern King and Queen) in 1987 (Fig. 6.14), which are stylized abstractions of the biomorphic forms in his sculpture of the same name.²⁴ The monochromatic “Northern King and Queen” paintings have a sculptural quality to them, with stratified lines on a gray background creating a sculptural effect. Only the queen is painted with red accents. The color contrasts and the movements of lines create a unique sense of depth.

Not all of his sketches were sculpture-related. For example, in 1986 he made a pencil drawing entitled *Do No.1* (Move No.1) on a two-meter (six foot) long roll of Japanese paper (Fig. 6.15).²⁵ These kinds of pencil drawings, of which there are several, were dashed off for his own pleasure, not for the pursuit of images for his sculpture. The unfolding drawing begins with a female body that quickly takes on a surrealistic quality as the roll unfolds—her sensual limbs stretch and extend in a continuous line only to have another limb abruptly foreshortened. The short and long curvilinear contours of the female body create rhythmical move-

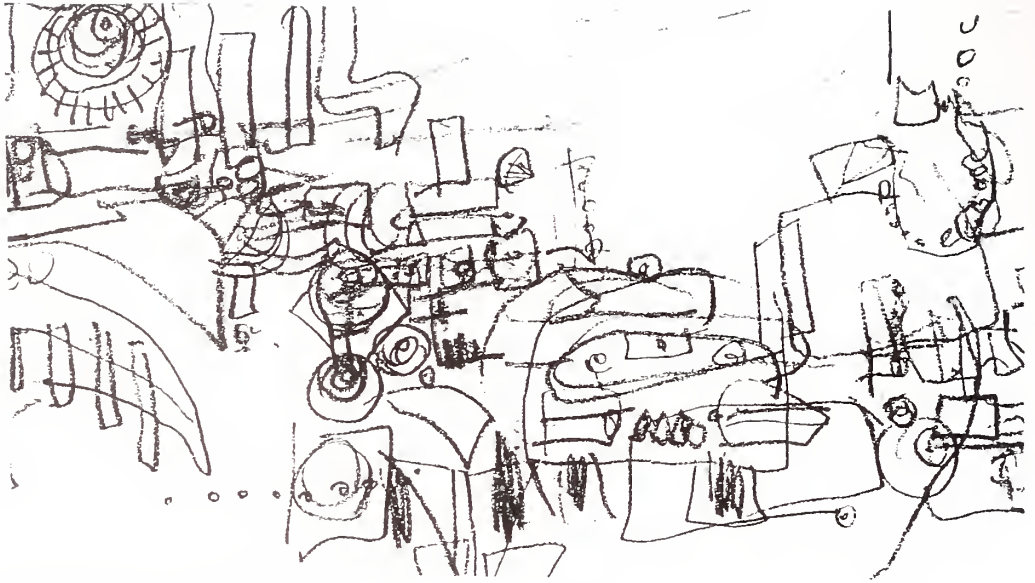


Fig. 6.16: *Tokyo no Hi* (Night Lights of Tokyo), 1988.

ments like a musical score. The recognizable body parts are quickly transformed into imaginary biomorphic forms and back to a normally proportioned woman at the end of his drawing. While the entire drawing has a wonderfully playful quality to it, his intention seemed to not only express his ideas about female sexuality, but also to explore the mysticism found in the feminine side of life itself. While there is no doubt that women were physically exciting to Bikky, he was perhaps even more intrigued by the “metaphysical” nature of women.

Bikky created another roll drawing in honor of Martine Reid’s visit to Tokyo. In a taxi to her hotel, Bikky made a quick sketch of the night scenes of Tokyo using a pencil on a long roll (3.7 meters, more than twelve feet) of Japanese paper. He called the work *Tokyo no Hi* (Night Lights of Tokyo; Fig. 6.16). Bikky caught the rhythm and energy of nighttime Tokyo; streets flooded with the reflection of traffic lights, the hypnotic blur from thousands of neon lights, the thick, jostling crowds and speeding cars were all turned into “living things” in Bikky’s drawing. These biomorphic forms are like nocturnal monsters breathing in the cosmopolitan night life of Tokyo: running, dancing, crying, and shouting, all headed toward the nonstop night feast.

Bikky also enjoyed creating calligraphy, and he included examples in the *Gensho-ten* (Origin of the Beginning) exhibition at the Muto gallery in Tokyo in

1988, a showing organized by Bikky and five professional artists who were also nonprofessional calligraphers who enjoyed the challenge of creating various styles of calligraphy without any restrictions. Bikky's work was dramatic and innovative, including a five-meter (sixteen foot) long sheet of Japanese paper on which he wrote the six exhibitors' names with Japanese characters, cut them into pieces, and scattered them at random.

Bikky continued his political involvement as an Ainu and environmental activist, donating his woodblock prints to calendars in 1987 and 1988 to raise funds for a citizen action group fighting against the development of a nuclear waste disposal facility near his studio. Bikky came out strongly for the causes he believed in: "Because I'm part of the Ainu race, I can't stand the environmental destruction [by the Japanese government and the Japanese timber industry]."²⁶

The 1987 calendar *Shiki no Kao* (Faces of Four Seasons), included Bikky's visionary image of four seasons expressed with abstract designs in black and white (Fig. 6.17). Some have strong red accents to express his anger and criticism against the environmental destruction in Hokkaido. In December 1987 he produced another woodblock calendar *Pirika Moshir* (the Beautiful Land, in Ainu). The calendar consisted of two pages, each with a different woodblock print: *Animals Running Toward the Green* and *Animals Running Among the Trees*.

In 1987 Bikky volunteered as chairman and organizer for the Second National Ainu Conference, held in March. Fourteen years had passed since the last conference in 1973, which Bikky had also chaired, and in the intervening fourteen years, Ainu concerns had broadened and now included international indigenous



Fig. 6.17: *Shiki no Kao* (Faces of Four Seasons), 1987.

and Ainu legislation issues. Inflaming passions at the time was the insensitive remark made by the Prime Minister Nakasone that the nation's Ainu minority population didn't really exist in Japan.²⁷ It prompted a great deal of heated, angry discussion among the Ainu. A two-day schedule was organized and more than four-hundred participants were actively involved in the discussion.

Illness

In spring 1988 Bikky, hard at work on artwork for exhibitions and commissioned pieces, was forced to take time off for surgery to relieve pain from thrombosis in one leg—a condition he suffered from since moving to Otoineppu that had now grown unbearable. He underwent various other medical tests at the time and came out with a clean bill of health.

In late summer, however, Bikky began feeling a sharp pain in his back. He went to the Asahikawa University Hospital to get an examination, but no disease was found. While he felt relieved that nothing of concern was found, the pain in the back went unabated. Unfortunately, the doctors missed a deadly cancer. To ease the pain, Bikky began going to see an acupuncturist in Otoineppu village every day.

The intensity of his back pain increased day by day. He could no longer walk normally and soon he needed the aid of a cane. Both Bikky and his friends thought the pain was an after-effect of the operation he had had in spring. Before long, his condition began to impinge on his ability to create his work. This led to extreme frustration because he wanted to create something special for an upcoming exhibition at the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery in January 1989, just a few months away. The honor of exhibiting in this gallery carried with it the pressure to produce the best work possible. Bikky had exhibited his work at the Kanagawa gallery in 1985 and had been impressed with the gallery's large open space, perfect for his large-scale work, and it challenged him to create even more monumental works.²⁸

Creativity unchecked despite his great pain, Bikky began to rely more and more on the help of his assistants, guiding them through the mechanical techniques needed to bring his vision alive. At the end of autumn Bikky's physical condition became much worse, and in late October his doctor informed Bikky's wife that he had been diagnosed as being in the terminal stages of cancer. His family

and friends, however, decided not to tell him that he had little chance of surviving the disease, as is often the case in families in Japan. The doctor prescribed a treatment of complete rest at the hospital and an intravenous drug therapy was begun.

Even though Bikky was more or less confined to his hospital bed, he devoted himself intensely to the pursuit of his creations; for example, when his right arm and hand were swollen, he fixed the drawing pencil in his fingers with cellophane tape and made sketches on his stomach.²⁹ He also painted using a paint brush in his mouth.³⁰ His friends recalled Bikky's frustration at that time. Bikky complained, "I can't work during the daytime because of visitors. I wake up in the night to work, but my wife is tired and is sleeping and I can't move very well by myself. I simply can't do it."³¹ But, he did, slowly, painfully, continue to work and the few times when he couldn't, he felt deeply humiliated at his unsuccessful attempts.



Fig. 6.18: *Kakusei A.C* (Atavism A.C), 1988.

Final Works and Exhibitions

For the *Ikki-tashoku* (A Tree with Many Touches) exhibition held in Tokyo's Inax Gallery in March 1988, Bikky submitted *Kakusei A.C* (Atavism A.C; Fig. 6.18),³² influenced, as noted by the highly respected art critic Wadao Takeoka, by the drums of Canada's Northwest Coast Indians.³³ *Atavism* was originally a set of three pieces, but one "drum" split in half during the tenth annual "Talk-about-Trees Exhibition" and it now consists of two drum-like pieces.³⁴ Bikky had created a much more complex sculpture with a similar title called *Animal-Atavism* in 1963, but *Atavism A.C* is more minimal and the two works bear few stylistic similarities. Both titles, however, show the depth of Bikky's ideas about the relationship between animal spirits and humans and connections to ancestral conditions,

perhaps one symbolic example of Bikky's acceptance of indigenous art as part of his psyche. Bikky's use of light-colored *katsura* (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum* Sieb. et Zucc.) wood suggests the cream-colored rawhide used for drum skins: The rear lighting used on this work for an exhibition at the Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art in 1993 highlighted geometric forms on the drums and caused them to glow like burning candles—or like the glow of the *inaw* in the fire pit in the home—creating a sacred atmosphere.

In the summer and fall of 1988, Bikky planned work for a number of exhibits. In the early summer Bikky and his friends organized the tenth “Talk-about-Trees Exhibition,” which had been taking place since Bikky first founded it in 1979 in the village of Otoineppu. Even though he was plagued by increasing pain, Bikky felt a deep responsibility that the exhibition be a success. The number of participating artists, both professional and amateur, increased year by year. Not only was the exhibit gaining in popularity, it was becoming an important exhibit for professional artists to show their work.³⁵ Later in the summer, the Sunazawa Bikky Exhibition was held at Park Hotel in Sapporo. The works of “Toys at 3:00 A.M.” and some of his paintings were displayed. From August 24 to October 2 Bikky participated in the Forth North Sculpture Exhibition at the Sapporo Sculptural Museum. Above all, Bikky dedicated himself to planning the work for the Contemporary Artists Series at the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery to be held from January 21 to February 5, 1989.

Final Illness

After extensive examinations in the middle of November 1988, Bikky's doctor finally diagnosed his disease as colon cancer that had metastasized. The doctor told his family that Bikky would live only a few more months at best, but it was probable that he would die before the end of the year. Even after this diagnosis Bikky's family didn't tell him of his true condition, and there are no indications that he knew how ill he was.³⁶ He often begged his friends to ask the doctors when he would be able to leave the Asahikawa University Hospital so that he could return to Otoineppu to work.³⁷

While he struggled against the unendurable pain in his back, he was much more worried about his incomplete works for the exhibition at the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery than he was for his own physical condition. Undaunted by his

pain but acknowledging that he needed to stay in the hospital to cure himself, he developed a plan to finish his work. When looking from the window of his room on the fourth floor, he noticed an empty plot of land at the corner of the hospital site. He proposed to his friends to bring the incomplete work to the nearby empty site so he could give instructions electronically to his assistants while he tracked the progress looking through binoculars. Because he was so serious, one of his friends actually negotiated for the loan of the site from the land owner.³⁸

The exhibition was now only six weeks away. He became desperate and frustrated and continually begged his doctor to release him from the hospital for a couple days so he could finish his work for the exhibition. The doctor had been impressed by his devotion to his art and his constant sketching and painting since he entered the hospital. She also found out about Bikky's plan to bring his incomplete works to the hospital site, and was very influenced and touched by his determination to finish his work. Finally, on December 11, 1988, she gave him permission to go home for two days. He was sent back in an ambulance with a nurse in attendance.

The people of Otoineppu knew of his illness and were concerned about Bikky; they decided to help him as much as they possibly could, placing his larger works outside near the window of his studio, where he could easily see them. They wanted everything to be ready for him to go to work. After a six-hour drive he arrived at his home, and the people welcomed his return. He was so happy that he got out of the ambulance by himself. He so intensely missed the natural environment surrounding his studio that he stood by himself, looked around and said, "Osashima is such a wonderful place!"

As soon as he saw his work, he guided his assistants to complete his work. Assisting Bikky's apprentices, Michio Takagi and Tomoko Noguchi, were Bikky's younger brother Kazuo Sunazawa and Bikky's childhood friend Takeki Fujito, both respected Ainu artists, and several village government officials, including Makoto Kawakami who supplied Bikky with trees for several years, often at no cost. Knowing his freedom would only last two days, Bikky drove himself intensely, pushing and pulling the IV stand while he received the intravenous drugs and a blood transfusion (Fig. 6.19). He worked madly for two days, and in the evening, when he wasn't directing his friends, he drew and painted.

One of the works that he worked on and completed during this frantic time was titled *Nitnekamuy* (Evil or Trickster God; see Fig. A.1). Bikky had started



Fig. 6.19: Bikky and his friends at home.

this piece earlier that year but had been interrupted by the need to finish other work.³⁹ The name of the work is derived from the legendary god of evil who lived around the Asahikawa region, known to play tricks on the Ainu people. No one knows why Bikky had the Ainu god in mind for his last work, but Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art curator T. Echizen speculated that because Bikky knew he was going to submit this work to the exhibition at the Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art, he wanted an Ainu name relevant to the Asahikawa area.⁴⁰ It's possible that Bikky also felt a sense that something malevolent was affecting his fate—Bikky could have chosen any number of Ainu names from the region, but he choose the evil trickster god, perhaps believing that *Nitnekamuy* was casting an evil spell on him.

At the end of the second day of Bikky's furlough from the hospital, several dozen of his friends held a party to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Bikky starting work in his studio Sanmore. Although he must have been tired, he stood rigidly at attention with the intravenous drugs dripping into his body, and made a speech in front of them. "I thank you for your support. I'm glad I've spent the

last ten years creating my artistic work in Osashima. But now I'm thinking about how I'm going to spend the next ten years. I'm going to show you my best art and I look forward to the work."⁴¹ His short visit ended the next day and on December 13 he went back to the hospital.

Though Bikky attended the exhibition opening at the Kanagawa Gallery on January 21, the end was clearly near. When he returned to the hospital, many people came to say their goodbyes over the next few days. Bikky suffered through the pain; the more pain he felt, the harder he tried to draw something in his sketchbook, hoping to take his mind off the pain. Then on January 25th, Bikky slowly began to lose consciousness after 4 P.M., repeatedly talking in his sleep, saying, "I will go back to Otoineppu and do more work,"⁴² and grasping his pencil. Around 9 P.M., he awoke to write his last words, "My disease is completely cured."⁴³ Shortly thereafter, at 9:15 P.M., he died. It was a fitting and dramatic death for the Northern King—a modern abstract sculptor, an Ainu artist. Bikky was fifty-seven years young.

During the Kanagawa exhibition, several of Bikky's sculptures sprouted wild mushrooms. How pleased he would have been to know that nature was finishing his work.

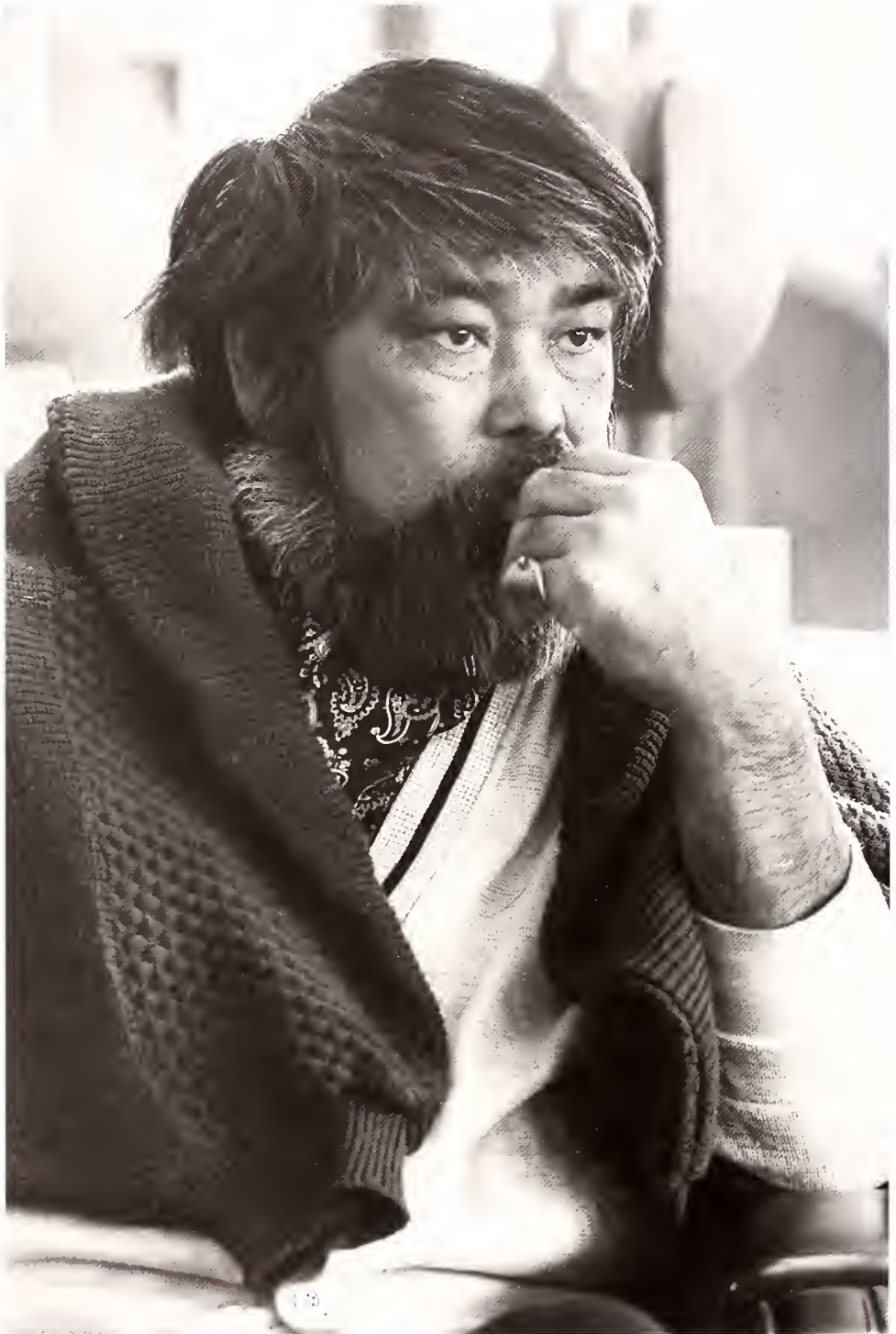
End Notes

1. *Creo Club* (October, 1988:10).
2. *Asahi Shimbun* (May 30, 1984).
3. M. Kinetsuka (1990b)
4. Poem written in Autumn 1988.
5. When Bikky needed time for introspection, he would seek solitude in the forest. He needed the challenges of nature, the wind and rain, to obtain the spiritual message waiting for him. This is reminiscent of the vision quest experienced by Native Americans.
6. Inukai (1970:621–2).
7. R. Sunazawa (1990:165).
8. Fukao and Kitayama (1986).
9. Hariu et al. (1989:101); Bikky's estimate for the life of *Four Winds* was optimistic. Installed in 1986, one pole was already badly decayed by 2002. The faster-than-expected decay forced the museum to make a difficult decision. If the pole was to be repaired successfully, it must be done immediately. There were several issues, if the pole was left to decay naturally, the museum would lose one of its most popular outdoor sculptures; on the other hand, there was Bikky's strong desire that nature finish his work. Because the work had taken on an almost mythic importance with art lovers, museum officials took the unusual step to have a public forum to help decide the future of the poles. Because all works in the outdoor museum were public art, museum officials thought the public should have their opinions heard.

On June 24, 2001, as part of the *Kiki* Exhibition, a fifteen-year memorial retrospective of Bikky's work, invited art critics, museum curators, artists, conservators, and the public gathered at the sculpture. While the poles were roped off to keep the crowd back, the grass growing at the top of two of the poles, and the precarious condition brought on by the deep penetration of the decay at the base of one pole, was clearly visible to the crowd. After much discussion with conflicting views, at the end of the afternoon it was decided that Bikky's wish for his work was to be honored. It was an emotional day for Bikky's supporters, and a precedent setting day for the museum community. To invite the public to voice their opinion, allowing them to in effect dictate the future of an extremely valuable work of art, is most unusual (*Hokkaido Shimbun*, June 25 & July 5, 2001; *Lure* [2001:4–10]).
10. Bikky, while admiring the adze work of Bill Reid and other Northwest Coast Native American artists, was never able to reconcile himself to use the adze as a "finishing" tool. The three large adzes I found in Bikky's studio were used to "rough out" designs. However the adze work he saw in Canada prompted him to use the very small, tightly controlled chisel marks found on his post-Canada work. The pre-Canada chisel use was more in line with a random chisel "design."
11. Hariu et al. (1989:100).
12. It was originally entitled *Yottsuo no Kaze B* (Four Winds B) (*The Hokkai Times*, August 27, 1986).
13. *Hokkaido Shimbun* (November 27, 1986).
14. These two pieces of work were untitled in the exhibition of *Contemporary Artists' Series '89* in the Kawagawa Prefectural Gallery from January 21 to February 5 in 1989 (The exhibition catalogue of *Contemporary Artists' Series '89*). Both works were titled *Wind* after his death (Hariu et al. 1989). While one of his major themes was "wind" after his return from Canada, I couldn't find who named them. This is just one of many name changes for Bikky's work.
15. The killer whale or *rep-un-kamuy*, is a powerful god to the Ainu. Many Ainu, from both the seashore area, and the forested mountains, use an abstract form of the killer whale as their *itokpa*, or the patrilineal ancestral sign.
16. In the exhibition *Tentacle-Sunazawa Bikky* (April 16-May 15, 1994) at the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Sapporo, and in an interview with Bikky for the *Kitano Gunzo* (The Northern Group) television show on Sapporo TV during the creation of the piece (aired November 13, 1988), this piece was titled *The King and Queen of Wind*. However, in the exhibition of *Contemporary Artists' Series '89*

- at the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery from January 21 to February 5 in 1989, it was titled *Kitano Gunzo* (Northern Group). I don't know if this title is a misprint in the catalogue, or if someone changed the title later.
17. Although this work was completed in 1987, he submitted it for *Modern Art Correspondence Exhibition* in 1988 (October 15-November 1) in Sapporo.
 18. Bikky was constantly playing with words. The dictionary meaning of the *kanji* (Chinese character) he used, *bunsuiri*, means both "watershed" and "divide." His memorial book, *Sunazawa Bikky Art Works* (edited by Hariu et al. 1989), titled these works as *Watershed A.B.* and the catalogue from his latest exhibition (April 16-May 15, 1994) at Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, titled the works as *Divide A.B.* The changing of titles is problematic for the art historian because of the confusion it creates.
 19. While there are minor similarities between the Ainu religion and Shintoism in the general area of a respect and fear for nature, the reverence of the natural environment was a belief common among many prehistoric tribal people. However, these similarities are superficial. Shintoism has at its base human pantheons, animal deities, animal mandalas, such as the deer mandalas mentioned above, and important human made shrines complexes. They also believe war heroes are the embodiment of god. The Ainu have none of these precepts. Shigeru Kayano, an important Ainu cultural leader from the Nibutani region, strongly rejects any connection with Shintoism. The Ainu belief system is based on the sole concept of maintaining a harmony with nature.
 20. Interview (May 16, 1995).
 21. *Creo Club* (October 1988:12).
 22. Interview (December 9, 1993).
 23. *Echizen* (1988:6).
 24. This painting was originally titled *Kita no Oh-hi no Mai* (Dance of the Northern Queen) in his memorial book, *Sunazawa Bikky Art Works* (Hariu et al. 1989).
 25. The date of painting was written by Bikky in 1986 at the end of drawing with his signature, but the museum catalog, *Tentacle-Sunazawa Bikky*, cited the date, 1987.
 26. *Hokkaido Shimbun* (November 20, 1986).
 27. Former Prime Minister Nakasone made a comment publicly that "the Ainu people have already intermingled with the Japanese people as far as I know," on 21 October, 1986 (*The Globe and Mail*, October 23, 1986).
 28. The other two artists who were part of the exhibition with Bikky at the Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery, were contemporary painter, Norio Ueno (b. 1932), and contemporary printmaker, Fumiaki Fukida (b. 1926).
 29. Yazaki (1989a:53).
 30. Fujiwara (1989:18).
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. There is some discrepancy in the cited alphabetized names of the drums. The literature calls the two remaining drum "A.C."
 33. W. Takeoka (1988).
 34. Bikky's very close friend from Otoineppu, Makoto Kawakami, was standing close to the *Atavism* set at the 10th Annual "Talk-About-Trees Exhibition" when suddenly, a child accidentally knocked over a drum which hit the floor with a loud cracking noise, splitting the drum in half (interview with Makoto Kawakami, April 4, 1994). He immediately felt uncomfortable, that something was wrong, a portent of something horribly wrong for the future. Kawakami called Bikky at home to tell him of the accident. At first Bikky laughed, not at all upset. He knew that this type of accident was inevitable if he wanted people to interact with his art. However, he became quiet, and after a few moments, stated that "perhaps, this isn't a good sign" (telephone interview with Makoto Kawakami, March 18, 1995). Interestingly, Katsumi Yazaki, his very good friend from Sapporo, had a similar experience around the same time. Bikky had

- carved a beautiful chair that, depending on the viewing angle, would depict a woman's body, not a chair. One day the chair suddenly split in half with a loud sound. He too immediately felt uncomfortable, with a shock going through his body, and breaking out in a heavy, cold sweat (Yazaki 1989b:8). In less than a month of these two incidents, Bikky would complain of terrible pain in his back. While not diagnosed at the time, his cancer was already claiming his body (interview with Makoto Kawakami, April 4, 1994).
35. In 1979 Bikky told his closest friend in Otoineppu, Makoto Kawakami, that his goal was to develop "The Talk-About-Trees Exhibition" to become a showcase for new modern sculpture, and that people who were interested in modern art would come to the country. Bikky's dream had become a fact until, unfortunately, his death. His energetic dynamism was the core of the exhibit. Without the core, the exhibit, and the dream, ended.
 36. Telling him about his true condition was a big discussion with his family and his friends. It was happening so fast that everybody seemed to be confused and didn't know how to deal with it. However, they eventually made up their mind to tell Bikky about his disease at the end of November or at the beginning of December. However, the doctor stopped them this time and said that Bikky didn't have any more time (Fujiwara 1989:17). They thought Bikky would die any day.
 37. Fujiwara (1989:18).
 38. Igarashi (1989:2).
 39. Echizen (1992:4).
 40. *Nitnekanuy* was one of the works he submitted to the exhibition, *Shiki o Egaku-Gendai no Zokei-ten* (Depicting Four Seasons-Wooden Beauty). Modern Sculpture at the Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art from December 18, 1988 to February 19, 1989.
 41. Kawakami (1989:25).
 42. Fujiwara (1989:18).
 43. Yazaki (1989b:53).



Frontispiece: Bikky working at his studio in Otoineppu, Hokkaido.

Bikky's Legacy

Bikky Sunazawa was one of the most unique contemporary artists to begin work in Japan after World War II. His fierce pride, his intense dislike of the centuries of discrimination by the Japanese toward the Ainu, his parents' leadership role in the fight for Ainu rights, and his traditional Ainu upbringing during his formative years all shaped his persona and the way he used his artistic talent. Blended with this was his exposure as a young man to the exciting avant-garde art world of 1950s Tokyo, during which time he absorbed influences from the artists and ideas that surrounded him.

Although proud of his heritage, Bikky had internalized the insults he had received from his Japanese schoolmates and struggled with the feeling that the Ainu were inferior. He fought against the barriers that locked a male Ainu artist into a life of being a sculptor of wood with only two artistic expressions, traditional art and the very narrow field of Ainu tourist art. Neither option was acceptable to Bikky. Mitsuko Arita, a confidant of Bikky during the mid-1950s, said:

Bikky had a strong negative complex about being an Ainu, but he studied hard to improve himself. He often said that he would be the last pure-blooded Ainu, and even though he had his complex, he was very proud of being Ainu. However, he didn't want to be an "Ainu bear carver," he wanted to show that the Ainu can do more. While he tried very hard to break the stereotyped image of the Ainu, he tried just as hard to live as an Ainu. It was very difficult for him.¹

Bikky's upbringing was unlike that of most Ainu or Japanese children. For a boy to learn girls' work from his mother was very radical. Gender roles were inflexible throughout Asia during Bikky's youth, and clearly, garment making was women's work. The training imbued the complex Ainu designs into Bikky's subconscious, however, providing the opportunity to make the designs work for him.

Bikky's early contribution to Ainu art—jewelry with Ainu designs—was due in large part to his strong aversion to carving small, simply crafted bears. Bikky's Ainu jewelry was extremely successful and quickly copied throughout Ainu country. The jewelry brought an avenue of artistic freedom to Ainu artists, a new and important source of income, and pride, for now the Ainu artist could create something besides the stereotypical bear. Even today you will find Ainu jewelry with “Bikky patterns” in every store that sells Ainu tourist art (Fig. 7.1).

Women were crucial in shaping Bikky's career, especially his mother's guidance, and his first wife's connection to the Tokyo avant-garde art world. Because he was very charismatic, Bikky also formed several, very different, circles of friends, many of whose ideas and knowledge affected his work. Bikky's art was initially influenced by a few abstract sculptors such as Ossip Zadkine and Shigeru Ueki, but for the most part Bikky followed his own star, and he always transformed these influences into his own very unique images and themes.

Although he had little formal education, Bikky had a hunger for knowledge and worked hard to absorb all that the intellectuals in the group could offer him. The association with and acceptance by writers such as Tatsuhiko Shibuzawa helped Bikky validate himself as a person and as an artist.² Shibuzawa also awakened Bikky's latent talent and love for words. Throughout the remainder of his life, Bikky played with Ainu, Japanese, and English words in his titles for his works and in his calligraphy.

Bikky was also influenced by others such as dancer Tatsumi Hijikata. Bikky was very impressed with Hijikata's expressions of sensuality and rarely missed any of his performances.³ It's probable that the forms inspired by the dancers' bending and twisting bodies emerged later as the surrealistic morphing sculptures found in the “Animal” series and the “Tentacle (maze)” series. It was the shared interest in erotica and surrealism that bonded Bikky, Shibuzawa, and Hijikata.

Bikky made an important mark on Ainu life with his civil rights work while he lived in Sapporo during the 1970s. The Ainu liberation movement's successes were few and small at the time, but they paved the way for important



Figure 7.1: Amu tourist art in general in Hokkaido.

concessions by the Japanese government. Today the Ainu speak of the activism of the 1970s just as Americans and Europeans talk of the civil rights successes of the 1960s. Political advancement of a minority group is always painfully slow, but the forward movement through the ebb and flow of time is caused by the passion of individuals such as Bikky. There are Ainu that remember Bikky more for his work as an Ainu activist than for his art.

While Bikky lived in Sapporo he also began to explore the monumental totem pole as an art form, which expanded the scope for other Ainu artists. Traditional Ainu art consisted of small objects such as the *inaw*, *ikupasuy*, bowls, platters, sword and knife scabbards, and other objects of similar size. While the Ainu made a great many smaller dugout canoes, and large sailing ocean canoes, with very few exceptions there is no evidence that they were normally “decorated,” with the exception of the placement of an *inaw* in the bow of the canoe.⁴ Bikky’s totem pole period, which culminated in 1983, opened a new era of large work for Ainu artists. Today there are many Ainu totem poles, such as those carved in Burnaby, British Columbia, 1990, by Ainu sculptors Nuburi Toko and his son Shusei Toko (Fig. 7.2).⁵ The work of other Ainu carvers can also be found throughout Hokkaido, all directly attributed to Bikky’s first poles.⁶

Bikky’s move to Otoineppu in 1978 brought dramatic change. He now had room to create large works and, most important, he had unlimited access to the largest trees in Japan. The biggest influence on his work was the natural environment that surrounded his home and studio. His love for the countryside invigorated him, and for the first time in his life, he became strongly involved in the civic programs of a community. The community reciprocated by supporting him and his celebration of modern and abstract art with the annual “Talk-about-Trees Exhibition.”

The greatest influence on Bikky’s later art, and his self image, was his trip to Canada’s Northwest Coast, meeting Bill Reid, and his exposure to the Native art of the area. The totem poles of the coastal region humbled and awed him with their power and presence, and he was moved by the decomposing fallen old totem poles. For Bikky this was the natural order of things, the returning to nature, an element missing in his own art. While he was always extremely close to nature as his Ainu culture and religious belief dictated, he now believed that nature was the final part of the sculpting process, that nature was now in fact his partner.



Fig. 7.2: “Kamui-Mintara” (Playground of the Gods) carved by Nuburi Toko and Shusei Toko in Burnaby, B.C.

While the Canadian First Peoples’ artwork was very impressive to Bikky, it was the respect that the mainstream culture held for the artists and, more important, the respect for Native peoples in general that he found almost unbelievable. While not perfect, the positive condition of Native Canadians far exceeded that of the Ainu. That this could be possible shocked Bikky to his very soul. He began to display his ethnicity proudly in his art and began naming his work with Ainu names.

After his return to Otoi-neppu in 1983, Bikky worked like never before. Influenced by his experience in Canada, his art changed. It was bigger, as in his monumental pieces *Four Winds* and *Listen to the Wind*, and smaller, as in his *Toys at 3:00 A.M.* The rough, crude axe marks of Bikky’s monumental works evoked a primal spirit and overall the works express the severe yet dynamic northern environment. Bikky found the harsh northern winters an exciting challenge, and he brought that rigor to his art. In contrast, his small works reflect meticulous detail

that were the direct result of exposure to the work of Bill Reid. Pieces such as *Toys at 3:00 A.M.* are polished and smoothly finished. The two extremes reflect the dynamic public side of his personality contrasted with Bikky's sensitive private self.

Throughout Bikky's artistic life he strove to express his personal mythology and poetic sensitivity through abstract sculptural form. Bikky's beliefs derived from Ainu traditions but also included his unique interpretations based on his influences, life experiences, and dreams.⁷ He constantly sought a supernatural order of things to transcend everyday reality as we know it in *kamuy mosir*, the Ainu spirit world, which coexists with earth's rhythms with dignity. For Bikky, his work was more than the manipulation of wood and form; he believed that the spirit of the tree allowed him to not only listen to the tree but to give it new life as part of a work of art after it had been cut down. In reaching for the *kamuy*, the gods, he went beyond the concept of naturalism and reached into the abstract celestial world of the Ainu.

The dramatic circumstances surrounding Bikky's death in 1989 were widely reported in various newspapers throughout Japan. On a private level, Bikky's book of condolences—containing statements and essays from friends, government officials, and art critics, and newspaper articles—was published as a small book entitled *Mokuba ni notta Bikky* (Bikky on a Wooden Horse).⁸ A photography book was also published in the same year by local photographer, Hiroaki Kai, who was fascinated by Bikky's artistic charisma and kept a pictorial record of the last six years of Bikky's life. The book is titled *Sunazawa Bikky Shashin-shu: Hikari to Kage* (Lights and Shadows: A Photographic Collection of Bikky Sunazawa). More of Bikky's work was made into a book entitled *Sunazawa Bikky Sakubin-shu* (Bikky Sunazawa Art Works) published in 1989.⁹ This book includes more of his writings, sketches, and some of art critics' condolences regarding Bikky's death and work. In 1990 a large number of memorial essays written by a variety of people including Ainu community leaders, modern art critics, and poets appeared in several major newspapers in Hokkaido. In the same year *Sunazawa Bikky Sobyō: Kita no Onna* (Bikky Sunazawa Sketches: Northern Woman) was published, which also includes Bikky's short stories and essays, and artistic statements.¹⁰

As a testimonial to Bikky's impact on the contemporary art of the Ainu, and abstract art in general, at the time of this writing, there are no fewer than three museums being planned for Bikky's work. However, destined to be the most important is the museum that was opened on April 26, 2003. The village of

Otoineppu, where Bikky spent the last ten years of his life, honored Bikky with a museum named Atelier Sanmore, on the same site as his last studio of the same name. Otoineppu is a most appropriate place for this museum for visitors to not only appreciate his work but also to feel and get a sense of the environmental surroundings that Bikky not only loved, but inspired him to create great art. He once stated:

The northern country doesn't give up winter easily, when winter loses the fight, spring still has to be in combat against the snow and cold. When it's all over, the warm brilliant rays of the sun seem to sing a song in praise of victory (Hariu et al. 1989:97).

As we grow to understand and appreciate Bikky's view of the energy found in all life forms living in the Playground of the Gods, our own lives are richer. His artistic work and his fight for Ainu equality will always be an inspiration to the Ainu people.

Chisato O. Dubreuil

End Notes

1. Interview (May 14, 1995).
2. During the 1960s Shibuzawa divorced his first wife and married another woman. Bikky liked and respected the first wife and couldn't understand the divorce. He chided his friend and finally Shibuzawa ended his friendship with Bikky. It was a great loss, but Bikky continued to respect Shibuzawa throughout his life (interview with Junko Takagi, April 25, 1994).
3. Interview with Kazuko Arita (May 14, 1995).
4. However, there were two Ainu ocean-going plank boats, *ita-oma-chip*, excavated from the suburbs of Tomakomai, a port city on the south central shore of Hokkaido, with one boat having the characteristic Ainu *ay-us* design motif. Buried under volcanic ash when Mt. Tarumae, thirty kilometers from Tomakomai, erupted in 1667, the boats are dated to the early 1600s. The design motif is carved into the gunnels of the boat. A paddle, excavated from the same site, has an *itokpa*, the patrilineal ancestral sign, carved in the blade (K. Ohtsuka 1992: 312-313).
5. These poles were done as symbols of the friendship between Burnaby, British Columbia in Canada and Kushiro, Hokkaido in Japan of their sister-cities relationship. This large outdoor sculptor park is named, "Kamui Mintara" (Playground of the Gods), the same title Bikky used for a sculpture in 1977 (See Fig. 7.2). Although Bikky spelled the title, "kamuy-mintar," Toko used a slightly different spelling, "Kamui Mintara". The spellings of Ainu words varied considerably according to region or, later, according to personal preference.
6. However, many so-called Ainu representation of totem poles for tourist areas were done by Japanese carvers as well.
7. Tatsuhiko Shibuzawa also introduced Bikky to French surrealist writers whom he came to greatly admire and influenced him (interview with Mistuko Arita, May 14, 1995). Bikky began putting a notebook with pencils near his bed in order to keep dreams alive when he woke up, or when something suddenly came into his mind. He called these writings "word sketches" (*Ginka* 1983:135-6). In 1976, some of the dream writings were published as a small, limited edition book entitled *Aoi Sakyu nite* (In the Blue Sand Dune), a work that is very abstract with strong surrealist overtones.
8. R. Sunazawa, ed. (1989).
9. Hariu et al. (1989).
10. R. Sunazawa, ed. (1990).

Bikky's work can be found in numerous public and private collections in Japan and Canada (in alphabetical order):

Ainu Memorial Museum of Kaneto Kawamura, Asahikawa, Hokkaido

Aoki, Sotoji, Tokyo

Arita, Mitsuko, Tokyo

Asahikawa Professional High School, Asahikawa, Hokkaido

Fujito, Takeki, Akan, Hokkaido

Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery, Kanagawa.

Kankyo Sekkei, Sapporo, Hokkaido

Kitanihon Mingei-sha, Co., Ltd., Sapporo, Hokkaido

Komakusa-so, Hokkaido

Kozo, Igarashi, Asahikawa, Hokkaido

Hayashi, Hideyuki, Tokyo

Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art, Asahikawa

Ishijima, Shinobu, Sapporo, Hokkaido

Ito, Toyomaru, Asahikawa, Hokkaido

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo, Hokkaido

The Nakagawa Experimental Forest of the Hokkaido University,
Otoineppu, Hokkaido

Otoineppu mura (Otoineppu village), Hokkaido

Pieoche, Setsuko and Pierre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Powell, Marjorie, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Reid, Martine and Bill, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Shanahan, Kumi, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Shimizu, Shogo, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Sunazawa, Chinita and Ichitaro, Sapporo, Hokkaido

Sunazawa, Kazuo, Akan, Hokkaido

Sunazawa, Ryoko, Sapporo, Hokkaido

Toya mura (Toya village), Hokkaido

Yamamoto, Minoru and Mitsue, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Yamashiro, Yakeo and Sumiko, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Yazaki, Katumi, Sapporo, Hokkaido

Yukarori Kogei-kan (Yukar Weaving Arts and Crafts Museum),
Asahikawa, Hokkaido

and in the collection of the author

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1973 "Ainu Undo no Susume-kata Chosetsu ni" (Changing Ways to Encourage Ainu Activity), January 16.

— "Ainu Undo: Futatsu no Wadai" (Ainu Activism: Two Topics), May 1.

1974 "Now: Hokkaido 20-nin no Ishoku Jinbutsu-zu (8)" (Now: Portraits of 20 Unique Figures in Hokkaido [8]), April 6.

1976 "Ki-men ni Idomu, Ainu no Tamashii" (Challenge the Wooden Masks with Ainu's Soul), July 19.

— "Minzoku-ki o Takaraka ni" (Hoisting the People's [Ainu] Flag), July 19.

1979 "Mura ni Chokoku-ka ga Sumitsuita" (The Sculptor Began Settling at the Village), January 30.

— "Ao Enpitsu" (The Blue Pencil), April 20.

— "Datsu Tokai no Chokokuka, Sunazawa Bikky-san" (Sculptor Bikky Sunazawa Sets Himself Free from Urban Life), June 27.

— "Henpi no Mura de Iyoku Saku o Tsugi-tsugi" (Enthusiastically Creating Works in a Remote Village), December 29.

1982 "Shin-jin Kokki '82: Hokkaido (10)" (New Persons for National Record '82: Hokkaido [10]), May 13.

1983 "50-sai Sugitekara Kaigai e" (Going Abroad over 50), September 12.

— "Bikky-san, Kaigai Yuhi" (Mr. Bikky Goes Abroad with Great Ambition), October 7.

1984 "Dohoku no Sakka Futari ga Sapporo de Doji ni Koten" (Two Artists from Northern Hokkaido Hold Simultaneous Exhibitions in Sapporo), May 30.

1985 "Bikky-san ga Mokucho Koten" (Mr. Bikky's Woodcarving Exhibition), April 27.

— "Yujin ra Kyoryokushi Monumento" (Friends Help Create a Monument), June 28.

1987 "Shizen no Taisetsu sa Genso-teki ni Utae Mokuhanga Karender Ni-sakume" (A Second Wood Block Print Calendar with Surrealistic Overtones Promotes the Importance of Nature), December 16.

1988 "Art Salon," August 28.

— "Art Salon, Bijutsu" (Art Salon, Art), October 23.

1989 "Seimei no Shimpi" Horitsuzuketa Sunazawa Bikky-san Shikyo" (Mr. Bikky Sunazawa, Who Passed Away, Had Been Carving the "Mysticism of Life"), January 26.

— "Tensei Jinsei" (Heavenly Voice, Human Voice), January 27.

— "Bikky-san no Tsuito-shiki ni 300-nin" (300 People Attend a Ceremony Held in Bikky's Memory), January 30.

— "Hitotoki" (The Moment), February 2.

— "Bikky' ni Sasageru Chohen-shi" (Dedication of a Long Poem in Memory of Bikky), February 5.

1990 "Isai o Hanatsu Bikky Saku-hin, Janru Koe Kanmei Yobu" (Bikky's Distinctive Work Impresses Viewers), March 18.

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Selected Exhibition Printed Materials

(CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED)

- 1967 *Zasshu Kosei Sho-dobutsu no Yaen-ten* (Hybrid Construction: Small Animals at the Night Feast). Sapporo: Tokeidai Gallery, November 9–November 15, 1967.
- 1976 *Sunazawa Bikky Ki-men-ten* (Bikky Sunazawa Exhibition of Wooden Masks). Tokyo: Kunugi Gallery, July 19–July 24, 1976.
- 1977 *Tentacle (meikyū) [Tangible]: Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (The Exhibition of Bikky Sunazawa: Tentacle (maze) [Tangible]). Tokyo: Kunugi Gallery & Tamura Gallery, September 12–September 18.
- 1980 *Mokuba ni Notta Bikky-ten* (The Exhibition of Bikky Riding on A Wooden Horse). Sapporo: Art Gallery Saito, December 4–December 9, 1980.
- 1981 *Mokucho ni Notta Bikky-ten* (The Exhibition of Bikky Riding on a Wooden Bird). Sapporo: Daido Gallery, February 16–February 21.
- *Kita no Shigin-tachi ten* (The Exhibition of Northern Poets). Tokyo: Gallery Toshin, March 16–March 27

- 1983 *Sunazawa Bikky - Juto (Wooden Head)*. Tokyo: Aoki Gallery, September 5–September 17.
- 1984 *Sunazawa Bikky Exhibition - Furiko (A Pendulum)*. Sapporo: Gallery Pambazuko, March 18–April 1.
- 1985 *Hokkaido o Horu Bikky Sakuhin-ten* (Carved Hokkaido: Bikky Exhibition). Asahikawa: Seibu Department Store, June 26–July 3.
- 1985 *Kita o Horu Bikky-ten* (The Carved North: Bikky Exhibition). Tokyo: Tobu Department Store, September 12–September 17.
- 1986 *Ki no Roku-nin-ten* (An Exhibition of Six Artists of Wood). Sapporo: The Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, August 23–September 3.
- 1987 *Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (Bikky Sunazawa Exhibition). Sapporo: The Sapporo Park Hotel, August 23–August 22.
- 1988 *Ikki-tashoku-ten* (The Exhibition of a Tree with Many Touches). Tokyo: The Inax Gallery 2, March 2–March 31.
- 1989 *Gendai Sakka Series '89: Norio Ueno, Bikky Sunazawa, and Fumiaki Fukita* (Contemporary Artists' Series '89). Yokohama: The Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery, January 21–February 5.
- 1990 *Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (Bikky Sunazawa Exhibition). Asahikawa: The Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art, January 5–February 18.
- 1993 *Hito to Kaze to Kamigami: Hokkaido no Gendai Mokuchō* (Man, Winds, and Gods: Contemporary Wooden Sculptures in Hokkaido). Asahikawa: The Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art, August 28–October 3.
- 1994 *Tentacle - Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (Tentacle: Bikky Sunazawa Exhibition). Sapporo: The Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, April 16–May 15.
- 1995 *Ki no Kioku, Chokoku no Kioku* (Memory of Wood, Memory of Sculpture). Sapporo: Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo, October 28–December 3.
- 1999 *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*. Washington, D.C.: National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, April 30, 1999–January 2, 2000.
- 2001 *Kiki: Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (Kiki: Bikky Sunazawa Exhibition). Sapporo: Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo, June 6–July 15.

Television Productions

- 1965 *Koa-kanno no Musuko-tachi (Koa-kanno's Sons)*, produced by Hokkaido Television (edited and organized by Yoshida Gosuke), January 15.
- 1985 “Kamuy no Daichi ni Mokurei ga Hibiku (The Spirits of Wood Echo in the Land of the Kamuy),” *Document Ningen Retto* (Documentary, Human Islands), produced by NHK (Nippon-Hoso Kyokai-The Japanese Broadcasting Association), March 9.
- 1985 “Ki ga Watashi-tachi Kureta Mono (What Trees Give to Us),” *Sunday Q*, produced by Sapporo Television, June 10.
- 1988 *Kitano Gunzo* (The Northern Group), produced by Sapporo Television, November 13, 28 min.
- 1990 *Nichiyo Bijutsu-kan* (The Sunday Gallery), produced by NHK (Nippon-Hoso Kyokai – The Japanese Broadcasting Association), February 11.
- 2001 *Nichiyo Bijutsu-kan* (The Sunday Gallery), produced by NHK (Nippon-Hoso Kyokai – The Japanese Broadcasting Association), June 3.

Figure List

**Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all pieces are by Bikky Sunazawa.*

- Front Cover** “Juka” (Wooden Flowers), 1989
Willow; 212.0 x 140.0 x 140.0 cm
Otoineppu Village Office, Hokkaido
Photo: Chip Clark
- Back Cover** “Yottsu no Kaze” (Four Winds), 1986
Glehn’s spruce, 7 m
Hokkaido Museum of Contemporary Art,
Sapporo
Photo: Toshie Fujishima
- Frontispiece** Bikky Sunazawa, June 25, 1983
Photo: Hiroaki Kai
- Inside Flap** Chisato Dubreuil, 2003
Photo: Regina VanDoren
- Introduction**
- Frontispiece Bikky is carving a small piece in 1980s.
Photo: Hiroaki Kai
- Figure A.1 “Nitnekamuy (Evil God),” 1988
Katsura, Manchurin ash, walnut; 122.0 x
26.0 x 48.0 cm.
Hokkaido Asahikawa Museum of Art,
Asahikawa.
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds., 1999;
Fig. 47.27)
- Figure A.2 Bikky Sunazawa, in a wheelchair at the
Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery, 1989
Photo: Hiroaki Kai
- Figure A.3 “Kiki” (the spirit of wood) calligraphy by
Bikky Sunazawa, 1989
The catalogue of *The Contemporary Artists’
Series ‘89* in the Kanagawa Prefectural
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Ref: *Gendai Sakka Series ‘89* (1989:9)
- Sidebar 1: Who Are the Ainu?**
- Figure A1.2 Maps of Hokkaido and Ainu lands
(a) Traditional and Modern Ainu
Territories
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds.,
1999:Fig. 1.3)
(b) Modern Hokkaido
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds., 1999;
Fig. 7.7 [after Siddle 1996])
- Figure A1.3 Ainu Hunter in Mountain Clothes, late
19th century
National Park Service, Longfellow National
Historic Site, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
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- Sidebar 2: The Ainu Homeland**
- Figure A.2.1. Scenic photo of Hokkaido, c. 1990
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Chapter 1: Bikky’s Early Life and Influences
(1931-1953)**
- Frontispiece Bikky’s piece carved with his name,
“Bikky,” 2000.
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 1.1 A photo of the 1932 Ainu activists’ lobby
delegation in Tokyo: Koa-kanno (right),
Peramonkoro (left) with Bikky as a year-old,
and three other Ainu activists
Photographer unknown
- Figure 1.2 Bikky’s father, Ichitaro Sunazawa
(Koa-kanno), 1940s
Photographer unknown
- Figure 1.3 Bikky’s mother, Peramonkoro Sunazawa,
c. 1960
Photo: Masako Kinoshita
- Figure 1.4 An early abstract pen drawing by Bikky
Sunazawa, date unknown
Paper with pen; 27.5 x 38.0 cm
Kazuo Sunazawa, Akan, Hokkaido.
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 1.5 Untitled horse sculpture, late 1940s
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Kazuo Sunazawa, Akan, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 1.6 Wooden finger rings, late 1960s or
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Wood; 1.5 cm diameter
Kitanihon Mingeisha Co., Ltd.,
Sapporo, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil

Sidebar 3: Ainu Wood Carving

- Figure 1.3.1 Ikupasuy (prayer-sticks), artist unknown, mid 20th century
Wood; (from top) C18761, 29.2 cm (L); C18764, 28.0 cm (L); C18770, 33.0 cm (L); C14724a, 35.5 cm (L); C13467, 35.5 cm (L)
Buffalo Museum of Science
Photo: Susan Einstein
- Figure 1.3.2 Four inaw by Bikky Sunazawa, 1980s
Willow; approximately 30 - 40 cm
Photo: David H. Dubreuil

Chapter 2: *The Night Train to Tokyo: Bikky's Art Evolves (1953-1964)*

- Frontispiece Bikky in Asahikawa, Hokkaido in the 1960s.
Photographer unknown.
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- Figure 2.1 "Woman with Fan" by Ossip Zadkine, 1918
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- Figure 2.2 "Torso" by Shigeru Ueki, 1952
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- Figure 2.3 "Dobutsu 6 - Hokaku sareta Dobutsu" (Animal 6 - Captured Animal), 1960
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Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 1)
- Figure 2.4 "Animal B," 1962
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Location unknown
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- Figure 2.5 "Animal-Ushi (Animal-Cow)," 1962
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Location unknown
Ref: Echizen (1993b:Fig. 7)
- Figure 2.6 "Animal - Me (Animal-Eye) (B)," 1963
Pine; 133.0 x 30.0 x 30.0 cm
Private collection
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 3)

- Figure 2.7 An Ainu design, kamuy-chik, on a textile work by Midori Toko, 1990s
Cotton, cotton thread: L 30.0 cm x W 28.0 cm
Private collection
Photo: David H. Dubreuil.

Sidebar 4 Ainu Tourist Art

- Figure 2.4.1 Photograph of Kamizaki Souvenir Shop in Asahikawa, early 20th century
Ref: Ishijima (1980b:3).
- Figure 2.4.2 Bikky mon'yo design drawing (no. 8), February 26, 1967
Pencil on paper; 28.0 x 21.5 cm.
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Photo: David H. Dubreuil.

Sidebar 5, Ainu Fabric Art

- Figure 2.5.1 Ainu girls practicing design motifs on sand in a scene from Shimanojo Murakami's *Ezo-shima kikan* (Curious Sights of Ezo Island), 1799
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Photo by Susumu Tameoka
- Figure 2.5.2 "Attush" garment, back view, 19th century
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National Museum of Natural History (E150779)
Photo: Dana Levy.
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds., 1999: Fig. 42.3)
- Figure 2.5.3 Women's tattoo designs (patterns of the west Hidaka band, examples from Piratori village)
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Chapter 3: *The Back of the Mask: Art and Activism in Sapporo (1964-1978)*

- Frontispiece Bikky being interviewed by a newspaper reporter in April 1974.
(*Asabi Shimbun*, April 6, 1974).
- Figure 3.1 Tentacle (precise title unknown), approx. 1976.
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Location unknown
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1994:86)

- Figure 3.2 (left) “Ki-ebi” (Wooden Lobster), 1976
Walnut, oilstain, pigment; 82.0 x 40.0 x 7.0 cm
Private collection
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1994:Fig. 28).
- (right) “Ki-bachi” (Wooden Bee), 1979
Walnut, oilstain, pigment; 30.0 x 26.0 x 10.5 cm
Teshiogawa Onsen, Otoineppu, Hokkaido
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1994:Fig. 30)
- Figure 3.3 Bear and Ekashi (respected Ainu elder), 1973
Wood; 69.5 x 56.5 cm
Kitanihon Mingeisha Co., Ltd., Sapporo, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 3.4 Untitled stacked images (a precursor to Bikky’s later totem poles), 1972
Wood; 199.0 x 38.0 cm
Kitanihon Mingeisha Co., Ltd., Sapporo, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 3.5 “Fusetsu no Gunzo” (Wind and Snow Group) by Shin Hongo, erected in Asahikawa Joban Park in 1970 (reconstructed in October, 1977)
Bronze; 230 cm
Asahikawa city, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 3.6 The Ainu Flag, designed by Bikky Sunazawa, used at the 44th pan-Hokkaido United Labor Day Rally, May 1973
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- Figure 3.7 “Kimen” (mask), 1979
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- Figure 3.8 The relief sculpture, “Kamuy-mintar,” 1977
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- Figure 3.7.2** Photo of Umetaro Matsui in Asahikawa, early 20th century
The Ainu Memorial Museum of Kaneto Kawamura, Asahikawa, Hokkaido
Photographer unknown
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Photo: Hiroaki Kai.
- Figure 4.1 Untitled totem pole, 1979
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Ainu Memorial Museum of Kaneto Kawamura in Asahikawa, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil.
- Figure 4.2 “Kami no Shita” (Tongue of God), 1980
Japanese oak; 201.0 x 116.0 x 54.0 cm
Hokkaido Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds., 1999: Fig. 47.18)
- Figure 4.3 “Kita no Dobutsu tachi” (Northern Animals), 1980
Japanese oak, walnut; 34.0 x 267.0 x 37.0 cm; 13.0 x 80.5 x 31.0 cm; 29.5 x 65.0 x 45.5 cm; 173.0 x 48.0 x 24.0 cm; 29.0 x 35.0 x 34.5 cm; 47.0 x 74.0 x 26.5 cm; 15.0 x 71.0 x 20.0 cm; 51.5 x 40.0 x 33.5 cm; 65.0 x 45.5 x 49.5 cm; 93.0 x 32.0 x 47.5 cm
Chinita and Ichitaro Sunazawa, Sapporo, Hokkaido
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 17)
- Figure 4.4 “Shiko no Tori” (The Birds of Thought), 1981
Birch, Glehn’s spruce; 7.5 m H. (left); 12 m H. (center); 7.5 cm H. (right)
The Nakagawa Experimental Forest of the Hokkaido University, Otoineppu, Hokkaido
Photo: David H. Dubreuil.
- Figure 4.5 Same as Front Cover
- Chapter 5: Transforming Visions: Bikky and the Northwest Coast of Canada, 1983**
- Frontispiece Bikky standing next to a totem pole depicting frogs in the Gitksan Tsimshian village of Kitwancool in the upper Skeena River region, British Columbia in 1983.
Photo: Douglas Sanders.
- Sidebar 7: The Bear in Ainu Tourist Art**
- Figure 3.7.1 Untitled carved bear by Masao Ito, ca. 1942
Wood, paint, metal inlaid nails for eyes; 9.5 x 6.3 x 3.6 cm
Yakumo-cho Education Committee, Hokkaido
Photo: Shinobu Ishijima

- Figure 5.1 A figurative sculpture, “Setsuko doll”, 1983
Wood; 85.0 x 16.0 x 17.5 cm
Setsuko and Pierre Piechoe, Vancouver, British Columbia.
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 5.2 “Hole-through-the-Sky” totem pole, late 19th century
Wood; approx. 10 m
In situ Kitwancool, British Columbia
Photo: Werner Forman
- Figure 5.3 “Indian Dance A” painting by Bikky Sunazawa, 1983
Crayon, watercolor on paper; 52.0 x 36.0 cm
Shinobu Ishijima, Sapporo, Hokkaido
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1994: Fig. 69)
- Figure 5.4 Haida artist, Bill Reid (left) showing Bikky (center) how to use the adze in Reid’s Studio on Granville Island, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1983
Photo: Douglas Sanders
- Figure 5.5 Untitled painting, from “Images of British Columbia,” 1983
Pencil, watercolor on paper; 22.5 x 28.8 cm
Minoru and Mitsue Yamamoto, Vancouver, British Columbia
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 5.6 A mountain sheep horn bowl, 19th–20th century
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- Figure 5.7 Untitled work from “Images of British Columbia,” 1983
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Location unknown
Photographer unknown
- Figure 5.8 Dzoonokwa mask, Kwakwaka’wakw, 1897
Wood; 30.0 x 24.0 cm
American Museum of Natural History
Ref: Jonaitis (1991:Fig. 3.7)
- Figure 5.9 Untitled work from “Images of British Columbia,” 1983
Maple; 35.0 x 21.0 x 18.5 cm
Shinobu Ishijima, Sapporo, Hokkaido
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 24)
- Figure 5.10 “The Watchman” from “Images of British Columbia,” 1983
Yellow cedar; 210.0 x 52.5 x 52.0 cm
Ref: *Kiki: Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (2001: Fig. S-14)
- Figure 5.11 A modern frontal house pole by Bill Reid, assisted by Douglas Cranmer, 1959
Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia
Wood; 12.8 m
Photo: Bill McLennan

Sidebar 8 Bikky’s Tools

- Figure 5.8.1 A man’s makiri (knife), artist unknown, early 20th century
Wood, iron; 23 cm
Milwaukee Public Museum (N17340A,B)
Photo: Susan Einstein

Chapter 6: The Northern King: Final Years (1984–1989)

- Frontispiece Bikky working at his studio in Otoineppu, Hokkaido.
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Photo: Katsuaki Kitayama.
- Figure 6.1 “Me” (Buds), 1985
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The Asahikawa Professional High School, Asahikawa, Hokkaido
Ref: Hariu, et al. (1989:17)
- Figure 6.2 A house post in situ, Cowichan, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, 19th century
Wood; size unknown
The Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia
Ref: Suttles (1976:Fig. 4:10).
- Figure 6.3 “Yottsuo no Kaze” (Four Winds), 1986.
Glehn’s spruce, 7 m
Hokkaido Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo
Photo: Toshie Fujishima
- Figure 6.4 Bikky performing the kamuy nomi for the tree spirit using an ikupasuy and sake on January 18, 1986 in front of his studio, Otoineppu, Hokkaido
Hokkaido Shimbun, January 23, 1986
Photo: Katsuaki Kitayama
- Figure 6.5 “Kaze ni Kiku” (Listening to the Wind), 1986
Glehn’s spruce, katsura; 214.0 x 605.0 x 68.0 cm
Hokkaido Museum of Contemporary Art, Sapporo
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds., 1999: Fig. 47.24)

- Figure 6.6 "Kaze" (Wind), 1988
Japanese elm; 190.5 x 242.0 x 74.0 cm
Toyamura, Hokkaido
Ref: *Kiki: Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (2001:
Fig. S-30).
- Figure 6.7 "Kaze" (Wind), 1988
Japanese oak; 174.5 x 124.0 x 131.0 cm
Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art,
Sapporo
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 35)
- Figure 6.8 "Kaze no Oh to Oh-hi" (King and Queen
of Wind), 1988
Manchurian ash; 173.0 x 38.0 x 35.0 cm
Ryoko Sunazawa
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 37)
- Figure 6.9 "Kita no Oh to Oh-hi" (Northern King and
Queen), 1987
Walnut, Caster aralia; 138.0 x 76.0 x 66.0 cm
Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery, Yokohama
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 31)
- Figure 6.10 "Kita no Dobutsu" (Northern Animals),
1987
Japanese oak; 80.0 x 198.0 x 48.0 cm
Chinita and Ichitaro Sunazawa, Sapporo,
Hokkaido
Ref: *Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1990:Fig. 11)
- Figure 6.11 "Bunsui-rei A.B" (Watershed A.B), 1985
Japanese oak, Caster aralia; 169.0 x 99.0 x
29.0 cm; 172.0 x 53.0 x 30.0 cm
Chinita and Ichitaro Sunazawa, Sapporo,
Hokkaido
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1994:
Fig. 45)
- Figure 6.12 "Gozen Sanji no Gangu" (Toys at 3:00
A.M), 1987
Wood; 44.5 x 52.0 x 25.5 cm
Otoineppu Village Office, Hokkaido
Ref: Fitzhugh and Dubreuil (eds., 1999:
Fig. 47.22)
- Figure 6.13 "Transformation" pendant with detachable
"mask" by Bill Reid, 1982
Boxwood; 8.0 cm diameter; mask head;
5.5 cm
Martine Reid
Ref: Shadbolt (1986:51)
- Figure 6.14 "Kita no Oh to Oh-hi" (Northern King and
Queen), 1987
Crayon, watercolor on paper; 38.0 x
17.5 cm; 38.0 x 16.5 cm
Ryoko Sunazawa
Ref: Asakawa (1996:Fig. 44)
- Figure 6.15 "Do No.1" (Move No.1), 1987
Pencil on Japanese paper; 25.0 x
2107.5 cm
Otoineppu Village Office, Hokkaido
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten*
(1994:76 & 77; Fig. 85)
- Figure 6.16 Detail of "Tokyo no Hi" (Night Lights of
Tokyo), 1988
Pencil on Japanese paper; 25.0 x
369.0 cm
Martine Reid
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Fig. 6.17 "Shiki no Kao" (Faces of Four Seasons)
calendar, 1986
Woodblock prints; 67.0 x 33.0 cm
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Fig. 6.18 "Kakusei A.C" (Atavism A.C), 1988
Katsura; 122.0 x 80.0 x 15.0 cm; 121.0 x
73.0 x 15.0 cm
Toyamura, Hokkaido
Ref: *Tentacle Sunazawa Bikky-ten* (1994:
Fig. 54)
- Fig. 6.19 Bikky and his friends at home,
December 1988
Photo: Masahide Sato

Chapter 7: Bikky Legacy

- Frontispiece Bikky at home in 1988.
Photo: Masahide Sato.
- Figure 7.1 An Ainu tourist shop in Akan, Hokkaido,
2000
Photo: David H. Dubreuil
- Figure 7.2 "Kamui-Mintara" (Playground of the
Gods) carved by Nuburi Toko and
Shusei Toko, 1992
Burnaby, British Columbia
Wood; various sizes
Photo: David H. Dubreuil



Chisato O. Dubreuil, of Native Ainu descent, is a specialist in the arts and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the North Pacific Rim.

In addition to lecturing on traditional and contemporary arts internationally, her first book *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People* (1999), co-edited with William W. Fitzhugh, is considered a major study of the Ainu people. She is currently nearing completion on a work which considers the contributions of the Kitanmax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art ('Ksan) on the resurgence of the arts of the Gitksan Tsimshian in northern British Columbia.

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